

**KIERKEGAARD**



# KIERKEGAARD

Selected and Introduced by  
W. H. AUDEN



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Life travels upward in spirals. He who  
takes pains to search the shadows of the  
past below us, then, can better judge the  
tiny arc up which he climbs, more surely  
guess the dim curves of the future  
above him.



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## INTRODUCTION

I am not Christian severity contrasted with Christian leniency. I am . . . mere human honesty.

KIERKEGAARD

THOUGH his writings are often brilliantly poetic and often deeply philosophic, Kierkegaard was neither a poet nor a philosopher, but a preacher, an expounder and defender of Christian doctrine and Christian conduct. The near contemporary with whom he may properly be compared is not someone like Dostoevski or Hegel, but that other great preacher of the nineteenth century, John Henry, later Cardinal, Newman. Both men were faced with the problem of preaching to a secularized society which was still officially Christian, and neither was a naïve believer, so that in each case one is conscious when reading their work that they are preaching to two congregations, one outside and one inside the pulpit. Both were tempted by intellectual ambition. Perhaps Newman resisted the temptation more successfully (occasionally, it must be confessed, Kierkegaard carried on like a spiritual *prima donna*), but then Newman was spared the exceptional situation in which Kierkegaard found himself, the situation of unique tribulation.

Every circumstance combined to make Kierkegaard suffer. His father was obsessed by guilt at the memory of having as a young boy cursed God; his mother was a servant girl whom his father had seduced before marriage; the frail and nervously labile constitution he inherited was further damaged by a fall from a tree. His intellectual precocious-

ness combined with his father's intense religious instruction gave him in childhood the consciousness of an adult. Finally he was fated to live, not in the stimulating surroundings of Oxford or Paris, but in the intellectual province of Copenhagen, without competition or understanding. Like Pascal, whom in more ways than one he resembles, or like Richard III, whom he frequently thought of, he was fated to be an exception and a sufferer, whatever he did. An easygoing or prudent bourgeois he could never become, any more than Pascal could have become Montaigne.

The sufferer by fate is tempted in peculiar ways; if he concentrates on himself, he is tempted to believe that God is not good but malignantly enjoys making the innocent suffer, i.e., he is tempted into demonic defiance; if he starts from the premise that God is good, then he is tempted to believe that he is guilty without knowing what he is guilty of, i.e., he is tempted into demonic despair; if he be a Christian, he can be tempted in yet a third way, because of the paradoxical position of suffering in the Christian faith. This paradox is well expressed by the penitent shade of Forese when he says to Dante:

'And not only, while circling this road, is our pain renewed:

I say pain and ought to say solace.'

For, while ultimately the Christian message is the good news: 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill towards men—' 'Come unto me all that travail and are heavy laden and I will refresh you'; it is proximately to man's self-love the worst possible news—'Take up thy cross and follow me.'

Thus to be relieved of suffering in one sense is voluntarily to accept suffering in another. As Kafka says: 'The joys of this life are not its own but our dread of ascending to a

higher life: the torments of this life are not its own but our self-torment because of that dread.'

If the two senses of suffering are confused, then the Christian who suffers is tempted to think this a proof that he is nearer to God than those who suffer less.

Kierkegaard's polemic, and all his writings are polemical, moves simultaneously in two directions: outwardly against the bourgeois Protestantism of the Denmark of his time, and inwardly against his suffering. To the former he says, 'You imagine that you are all Christians and contented because you have forgotten that each of you is an existing individual. When you remember that, you will be forced to realize that you are pagans and in despair.' To himself he says, 'As long as your suffering makes you defiant or despairing, as long as you identify your suffering with yourself as an existing individual, and are defiantly or despairingly the exception, you are not a Christian.'

#### KIERKEGAARD AND THE EXISTENTIAL

However complicated and obscure in its developments it has become, Existentialism starts out from some quite simple observations.

- (a) All propositions presuppose the existence of their terms as a ground, i.e., one cannot ask, 'Does X exist?' but only, 'Has this existing X the character A or the character B?'
- (b) The subjective presupposition 'I exist' is unique. It is certainly not a proposition to be proven true or false by experiment, yet unlike all other presuppositions it is indubitable and no rival belief is possible. It also appears compulsive to believe that other selves like mine exist: at least the contrary presupposition has never been historically made. To believe that a world of nature

exists, i.e., of things which happen of themselves, is not, however, invariably made. Magicians do not make it. (The Christian expression for this presupposition is the dogma, 'In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth.')

- (c) The absolute certainty with which I hold the belief that I exist is not its only unique characteristic. The awareness of existing is also absolutely private and incommunicable. My feelings, desires, etc., can be objects of my knowledge and hence I can imagine what other people feel. My existence cannot become an object of knowledge; hence while, if I have the necessary histrionic imagination and talent I can act the part of another in such a way that I deceive his best friends, I can never imagine what it would be like to *be* that other person but must always remain myself pretending to be him.
- (d) If I take away from my sense of existence all that can become an object of my consciousness, what is left?
  - (1) An awareness that my existence is not self-derived. I can legitimately speak of *my* feelings. I cannot properly speak of *my* existence.
  - (2) An awareness that I am free to make choices. I cannot observe the act of choice objectively. If I try, I shall not choose. Doctor Johnson's refutation of determinism, to kick the stone and say, 'We know we are free and there's an end of it' is correct, because the awareness of freedom is subjective, i.e., objectively undemonstrable.
  - (3) An awareness of being *with* time, i.e., experiencing time as an eternal present to which past and future refer, instead of my knowledge of my feelings and of the outer world as moving or changing *in* time.
  - (4) A state of anxiety (or dread), pride (in the theological sense), despair or faith. These are not emotions



in the way that fear or lust or anger are, for I cannot know them objectively; I can only know them when they have aroused such feelings as the above which are observable. For these states of anxiety or pride, etc., are anxiety about existing, pride in existing, etc., and I cannot stand outside them to observe them. Nor can I observe them in others. A gluttonous man may succeed when he is in my presence in concealing his gluttony, but if I could watch him all the time, I should catch him out. But I could watch a man all his life, and I should never know for certain whether or not he was proud, for the actions which we call proud or humble may have quite other causes. Pride is rightly called the root of all sin, because it is invisible to the one who is guilty of it and he can only infer it from results.

These facts of existence are expressed in the Christian doctrines of Man's creation and his fall. Man is created in the image of God; an image because his existence is not self-derived, and a divine image because like God each man is aware of his existence as unique. Man fell through pride, a wish to become God, to derive his existence from himself, and not through sensuality or any of the desires of his 'nature'.

#### KIERKEGAARD'S THREE CATEGORIES

Every man, says Kierkegaard, lives either aesthetically, ethically, or religiously. As he is concerned, for the most part, with describing the way in which these categories apply in Christian or post-Christian society, one can perhaps make his meaning clearer by approaching these categories historically, i.e., by considering the Aesthetic and the Ethical at stages when each was a religion, and then comparing them

with the Christian faith in order to see the difference, first, between two rival and incompatible Natural Religions and, secondly, between them and a Revealed Religion in which neither is destroyed or ignored, but the Aesthetic is dethroned and the Ethical fulfilled.

#### THE AESTHETIC RELIGION (E.G., THE GREEK GODS)

The experience from which the aesthetic religion starts, the facts which it sets out to overcome, is the experience of the physical weakness of the self in the face of an overwhelmingly powerful not-self. To survive I must act strongly and decisively. What gives me the power to do so? Passion. The aesthetic religion regards the passions not as belonging to the self, but as divine visitations, powers which it must find the means to attract or repel if the self is to survive.

So, in the aesthetic cosmology, the gods are created by nature, ascend to heaven, are human in form, finite in number (like the passions) and interrelated by blood. Being images of passions, they themselves are not *in* their passion—Aphrodite is not in love; Mars is not angry—or, if they do make an appearance of passionate behaviour, it is frivolous; like actors, they do not suffer or change. They bestow, withhold or withdraw power from men as and when they choose. They are not interested in the majority of men, but only in a few exceptional individuals whom they specially favour and sometimes even beget on mortal mothers. These exceptional individuals with whom the gods enter into relation are heroes. How does one know that a man is a hero? By his acts of power, by his good fortune. The hero is glorious but not responsible for his successes or his failures. When Odysseus, for instance, succeeds, he has his friend Pallas Athene to thank; when he fails, he has his enemy Poseidon to blame. The aesthetic either/or is not good or bad but strong or weak, fortunate or unfortunate.

The temporal succession of events has no meaning, for what happens is simply what the gods choose arbitrarily to will. The Greeks and the Trojans must fight because 'hateful Ares bids.' To the aesthetic religion all art is ritual, acts designed to attract the divine favours which will make the self strong, and ritual is the only form of activity in which man has the freedom to act or refrain from acting and for which, therefore, he is responsible.

The facts on which the aesthetic religion is shattered and despairs, producing in its death agony Tragic Drama, are two: man's knowledge of good and evil, and his certainty that death comes to all men, i.e., that ultimately there is no either/or of strength or weakness, but even for the exceptional individual the doom of absolute weakness. Both facts it tries to explain in its own terms and fails. It tries to relate good and evil to fortune and misfortune, strength and weakness, and concludes that if a man is unfortunate, he must be guilty. Oedipus' parricide and incest are not really his sins but his punishment for his sin of *hubris*. The Homeric hero cannot sin, the tragic hero must sin, but neither is tempted. Presently the observation that some evil men are fortunate and some good men unfortunate brings forth a doubt as to whether the gods are really good, till in the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus it is openly stated that power and goodness are not identical. Again, the aesthetic religion tries to express the consciousness of universal death aesthetically, that is, individually, as the Fates to which even the gods must bow, and betrays its failure to imagine the universal by having to have three of them.

#### THE ETHICAL RELIGION (THE GOD OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY)

To solve the problem of human death and weakness, the ethical religion begins by asking, 'Is there anything man knows which does not come and go like his passions?' Yes

the concepts of his reason which are both certain and independent of time or space or individual, for the certainty is the same whether a man be sick or well, a king or a slave.

In place of the magnified passions of the aesthetic religion, the ethical sets up as God, the Ideas, the First Cause, the Universal. While to the former, the world begot the gods who then ruled over it because they were stronger than any other creature, in the latter God and the world are coeternal. God did not create the world of matter; he is only the cause of the order in it, and this not by any act of his—the neuter gender would be more fitting to him—for to be divine means to be self-sufficient, 'to have no need of friends.' Rather it is matter which, wishing to escape from the innate disorder of its temporal flux, 'falls in love' with God and imitates his unchangeableness in such ways as it can, namely by adopting regular movements. (Plato's introduction of a mysterious third party, the Demiurge who loves the Ideas and then imposes them on matter, complicates but does not essentially alter the cosmology.) Man, however, being endowed with reason, can apprehend God directly as Idea and Law, transcend his finite bodily passions, and become like God.

For the aesthetic either/or of strength or weakness, fortune or misfortune, the ethical religion substitutes the either/or of Knowledge of the Good or Ignorance of the Good. To the aesthetic, evil was lack of power over the finite world, for all finiteness, all passion is weakness, as goodness is gained by transcending the finite world, by a knowledge of the eternal and universal truths of reason which cannot be known without being obeyed. To the aesthetic, time was unmeaning and overwhelming; to the ethical, it is an appearance which can be seen through. The aesthetic worshipper was dependent on his gods who entered into relationship with him if and when he chose; the ethical worshipper enters into relationship with his god through his own efforts and, once.

he has done so, the relationship is eternal, neither can break it. The ethical hero is not the man of power, the man who does, but the philosopher, the man who knows.

Like his predecessor, however, he is not tempted and does not choose, for so long as he is ignorant he is at the mercy of his passions, i.e., he *must* yield to the passion of the moment, but so soon as he knows the good, he must will it; he can no more refuse assent to the good than he can to the truths of geometry.

As in the case of the aesthetic religion, there are facts with which the ethical religion cannot deal and on which it founders. Its premise 'Sin is ignorance; to know the good is to will it' is faced with the fact that all men are born ignorant and hence each individual requires a will to know the universal good in order to will it. This will cannot be explained ethically; first, because it is not a rational idea so that the ethical has to fall back on the aesthetic idea of a heavenly Eros to account for it. Secondly, it is not a universal; it is present or appeals to some individuals and not to others, so that the ethical has to call in the aesthetic hero whom it instructs in the good, and who then imposes justice by force. Art to the elect is no longer a religious ritual, but an immoral sham, useful only as a fraudulent but pragmatically effective method of making the ignorant masses conform to the law of virtue which they do not understand.

Lastly, there comes the discovery that knowledge of the good does not automatically cause the knower to will it. He may know the law and yet not only be tempted to disobey but yield to the temptation. He may even disobey deliberately out of spite, just to show that he is free.

### REVEALED RELIGION (JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY)

A revealed religion is one in which God is not present as an object of consciousness, either as a feeling or a proposi-

tion. He is not begotten by the world, nor does he impose order on its coeternal flux but creates it out of nothing, so that while God and the world are at every moment related, God is not knowable as an object. While in the aesthetic religion the feelings, and in the ethical religion, the ideas *were* the presence of God, they are now only *my* feelings, *my* ideas and if I believe that what I feel (e.g., God is present) or think (e.g., God is righteous) is caused by my relation to God, this belief is a revelation, for the cause is outside my consciousness. As one term of a relation, the other term of which is God, I cannot overlook the whole relation objectively and can only describe it analogically in terms of the human relation most like it, e.g., if the feeling of which I have immediate certainty is one which I would approximately describe as sonship, I may speak of God as Father.

There is no longer a question of establishing a relation between God and myself for as my creator he is necessarily related to his creature and the relation is presupposed by my existence; there is only a question of the right relation. The uniqueness of the relation is that it is a relation to an Other yet at the same time as continuous and inescapable as my relation to myself. The relation of the aesthetic worshipper to his gods is intermittent and depends on their pleasure—they do not have to get in touch with him at all. The relation of the ethical worshipper to the Ideas is intermittent or not depending on his pleasure. They are always there to be contemplated if he choose, as a river is always there to be drunk from if one is thirsty, but if he doesn't choose to contemplate them, there is no relation. But the relation to the creator God of revealed religion is unbreakable: I, his creature, can forget it as I can forget my relation to myself when I am thinking of other things, but it is permanently there, and, if I try to banish it permanently from consciousness, I shall not get rid of it, but experience it negatively as guilt and despair. The wrath of God is not a description of

God in a certain state of feeling, but of the way in which I experience God if I distort or deny my relation to him. So Dante inscribed on the portals of Hell: 'Divine Power made me, Wisdom supreme and Primal Love'—and Landor justly remarked about the Inferno that its inhabitants do not want to get out. To both the aesthetic and the ethical religion, evil was a lack of relation to God, due in the one case to the God's will, in the other to man's ignorance; to the revealed religion, evil is sin, that is to say, the rebellion of man's will against the relation.

The aesthetic commands cannot be codified because they are arbitrary commands of the gods and always novel. The ethical commands ought to be able to be completely codified as a set of universal moral laws. Revealed religion shows why this is impossible. A law is either a law *of* or a law *for*. Laws *of*, like the laws of science, are patterns of regular behaviour as observed by a disinterested observer. Conformity is necessary for the law to exist, for if an exception is found, the law has to be rewritten in such a way that the exception becomes part of the pattern, for it is a presupposition of science that events in nature conform to law, i.e., a physical event is always related to some law, even if it be one of which scientists are at present ignorant. Laws *for*, like human legislation, are patterns of behaviour imposed on behaviour which was previously lacking in pattern. In order for the laws to come into existence, there must be at least some people who do not conform to them. Unlike laws *of*, which must completely explain how events occur, laws *for* are only concerned with commanding or prohibiting the class of actions to which they refer, and a man is only related to the law when it is a question of doing or not doing one act of such a class; when his actions are covered by no law, e.g., when he is sitting alone in his room, he is related to no law at all.

If the commands of God were laws of man, then dis-

obedience would be impossible; if they were laws *for* man, then his relation to God would not be permanent but intermittent. The commands of God are neither the aesthetic fiat, 'Do what you must' nor the ethical instruction, 'These are the things which you may or must not do,' but the call of duty, 'Choose to do what at this moment in this context I am telling you to do.'

#### CHRIST THE OFFENCE

To one who believes that Jesus was what he claimed to be, the incarnation as an existing individual of the Son of God begotten of his Father before all worlds, by whom all things were made, his birth, life and death are, first, a simultaneous revelation of the infinite love of God—to be righteous means to love—and of the almost infinite sinfulness of man—without the gift of the Holy Spirit it is impossible for him to accept the truth; secondly, a revelation that God is related to all men, but to each of them uniquely as an existing individual, i.e., God is the father of all men, not of a chosen people alone, and all men are exceptions, not aesthetically, but as existing individuals—it is their existence not their natures which makes each of them unique; thirdly, a revelation that the Life is not an object for aesthetic admiration nor the Truth an object for ethical appropriation, but a Way to be followed, an inclination of the heart, a spirit in which all actions are done. In so far as collectively they considered their relation to God to be aesthetically unique, and individually an ethical relation to his Law, this revelation is an offence to the Jews; in so far as it proclaims that God the Father is not *a* God but *the* God, that Christ is not a teacher of truths but the Truth, it is an offence to the Gentiles.

The Jews would have welcomed a Messiah for them alone, but not one who demanded that they give up their claim to be the unique people of God or their belief that the



Law covers the whole duty of the individual; the Gentile imagination could have accepted another culture-hero to add to its old ones, the Gentile reason, another teacher to add new stores to its knowledge, but could not accept one who was a passive sufferer, put faith before reason, and claimed exclusive attention. The Jews crucified Jesus on the serious charge that he was a blasphemer, the Gentiles on the frivolous charge that he was a public nuisance.

#### PREACHING TO THE NON-BELIEVER

'It is,' Newman observed, 'as absurd to argue men, as to torture them, into believing.' However convincing the argument, however holy the arguer, the act of faith remains an act of choice which no one can do for another. Pascal's 'wager' and Kierkegaard's 'leap' are neither of them quite adequate descriptions, for the one suggests prudent calculation and the other perverse arbitrariness. Both, however, have some value: the first calls men's attention to the fact that in all other spheres of life they are constantly acting on faith and quite willingly, so that they have no right to expect religion to be an exception; the second reminds them that they cannot live without faith in something, and that when the faith which they have breaks down, when the ground crumbles under their feet, they *have to* leap even into uncertainty if they are to avoid certain destruction.

There are only two Christian propositions about which it is, therefore, possible to argue with a non-believer:

(1) That Jesus existed; (2) That a man who does not believe that Jesus is the Christ is in despair.

It is probably true that nobody was ever genuinely converted to Christianity who had not lost his 'nerve', either because he was aesthetically unfortunate or because he was ethically powerless, i.e., unable to do what he knew to be his duty. A great deal of Kierkegaard's work is addressed

to the man who has already become uneasy about himself, and by encouraging him to look more closely at himself, shows him that his condition is more serious than he thought. The points that Kierkegaard stresses most are, firstly, that no one, believer or not, who has once been exposed to Christianity can return to either the aesthetic or the ethical religion as if nothing had happened. Return he will, if he lose his Christian faith, for he cannot exist without some faith, but he will no longer be a naïve believer, but a *rusé* one compelled to excess by the need to hide from himself the fact that he does not really believe in the idols he sets up.

Thus the aesthetic individual is no longer content with the passive moderation of paganism; he will no longer simply obey the passions of his nature, but will have by will power to arouse his passions constantly in order to have something to obey. The fickle lover of paganism who fell in and out of love turns into Don Giovanni, the seducer who keeps a list so as not to forget. Similarly, the ethical philosopher will no longer be content to remain a simple scientist content to understand as much and no more than he can discover; he must turn into the systematic philosopher who has an explanation for everything in existence except, of course, his own existence which defeats him. Nothing must occur except what he can explain. The multitude of ordinary men and women cannot return to the contented community of the Greek chorus for they cannot lose the sense that they are individuals; they can only try to drown that sense by merging themselves into an abstraction, the crowd, the public ruled by fashion. As Rudolf Kassner says in his fascinating book, *Zahl und Gesicht*:

‘The pre-Christian man with his Mean (*Mitte*) bore a charmed life against mediocrity. The Christian stands in greater danger of becoming mediocre. If we bear in mind the idea, the absolute to which the Christian claims to be

related, a mediocre Christian becomes comic. The pre-Christian man could still be mediocre without becoming comic because for him his mediocrity was the Mean. The Christian cannot.'

To show the non-believer that he is in despair because he cannot believe in *his* gods and then show him that Christ cannot be a man-made God because in every respect he is offensive to the natural man is for Kierkegaard the only true kind of Christian apologetics. The false kind of apologetics of which he accuses his contemporary Christians is the attempt to soft-pedal the distinction between Christianity and the Natural Religions, either by trying to show that what Christians believe is really just what everybody believes, or by suggesting that Christianity pays in a worldly sense, that it makes men healthy, wealthy, and wise, keeps society stable, and the young in order, etc. Apart from its falsehood, Kierkegaard says, this method will not work because those who are satisfied with this world will not be interested and those who are not satisfied are looking for a faith whose values are not those of this world.

#### PREACHING TO BELIEVERS

The danger for the Christian in an officially Christian society is that he may think he is a Christian. But nobody except Christ and, at the end of their lives perhaps, the saints are Christian. To say 'I am a Christian' really means 'I who am a sinner am required to become like Christ'. He may think he believes as an individual when all he is doing is believing what his parents said, so that he would be a Mohammedan if they had been. The task of the Christian preacher is, therefore, first to affirm the Christian commands and arouse the consciousness of sin, and secondly to make the individual's relationship with Christ real, that is, contemporary.

The world has changed greatly since Kierkegaard's time and all too many of his prophetic insights have come to pass. The smug bourgeois Christendom he denounced has crumbled and what is left is an amorphous, despairing mass of displaced persons and paralysed Hamlets. The ubiquitous violence of the present age is not truly passionate, but a desperate attempt to regress from reflection into passion instead of leaping forward into faith. The worst feature, for example, of the massacre of the Jews by the Nazis is not its cruelty but its frivolity; they did not seriously believe that the Jews were a menace as the Inquisition believed about heretics; no, it was rather a matter of 'We must do something. Why not kill all the Jews?'

It is almost bound to be the fate of Kierkegaard, as of so many polemical writers, to be read in the wrong way or by the wrong people. The contented will not read him or read him only scientifically as an interesting case history. The unhappy and, for the most part, agnostic intellectuals who will read him, will confine themselves to his psychological analyses like *The Sickness unto Death* or his philosophical polemics like *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, which they will read poetically as sympathetic and stimulating reflections of their feelings and thoughts, but they will fight shy of books like *Training in Christianity* or *The Works of Love*, either because they are not as unhappy as they pretend or because they really despair of comfort and cling in defiance to their suffering.

Kierkegaard is particularly vulnerable to such misunderstanding because the only force which can compel us to read an author as he intends is some action of his which becomes inexplicable if we read him any other way, e.g., Newman's conversion to Roman Catholicism. In Kierkegaard's case there is indeed such an action, but the action is another book, *The Attack upon 'Christendom'*. The whole of his writings up to this one, written in the last year of his life, even the ser-

mons, are really 'poetical', i.e., Kierkegaard speaks in them as a genius not as an apostle, so that they all might have been published, as many of them were, anonymously. *The Attack upon 'Christendom'*, on the other hand, is that contradiction in terms, an 'existential' book. What for the author was the most important book of his life is for us, as readers, the least, for to us the important point is not what it contains, but the fact that Kierkegaard wrote it. For this reason, no selection from it appears here.

# THE WORKS OF SÖREN AABYE KIERKEGAARD (1813-55)

- \*The Journals (1834-55)
  - From the Papers of One Still Living (1838)
  - The Concept of Irony (1841)
  - Edifying Discourses (1843-44)
- \*Either/Or (1843)
- \*Repetition (1843)
- \*Fear and Trembling (1843)
  - Prefaces (1844)
- \*Philosophical Fragments (1844)
- \*The Concept of Dread (1844)
  - Three Discussions on Imagined Occasions (1845)
  - Stages on Life's Way (1845)
- \*Concluding Unscientific Postscript (1846)
- \*The Present Age (1846)
  - The Book on Adler (1846-47)
  - Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits (1847)
- \*The Works of Love (1847)
  - Christian Discourses (1848)
  - Two Minor Ethico-Religious Treatises (1849)

- \*The Sickness unto Death (1849)
- The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air (1849)
- The Point of View (1849)
- The Individual (1849)
- Training in Christianity (1850)
- The Attack upon 'Christendom' (1850)
- For Self-Examination (1851)
- Judge for Yourselves (1851-52)
- This Must be Said; So Let it now be Said (1855)
- God's Unchangeableness (1855)

W. H. Auden has selected and arranged the essence of Kierkegaard's thought from those titles in the above list marked with an asterisk.

# I

## PREFATORY APHORISMS

The knowledge of God is very far from the love of Him.

PASCAL

Calculation never made a hero.

J. H. NEWMAN

It is perfectly true, as philosophers say, that life must be understood backwards. But they forget the other proposition, that it must be lived forwards. And if one thinks over that proposition it becomes more and more evident that life can never really be understood in time simply because at no particular moment can I find the necessary resting place from which to understand it—backwards.

*Situation.* A man wants to make an important confession; but the man he wishes to unbosom himself to does not come at once, so he says something quite different.

The majority of men are subjective towards themselves and objective towards all others, terribly objective sometimes—but the real task is in fact to be objective towards oneself and subjective towards all others.

*A situation.* A man wishes to write a novel in which one of the characters goes mad; while working on it he himself goes mad by degrees, and finishes it in the first person.

A man walked along contemplating suicide; at the very

moment a slate fell and killed him, and he died with the words: God be praised.

In relation to their systems most systematizers are like a man who builds an enormous castle and lives in a shack close by; they do not live in their own enormous systematic buildings. But spiritually that is a decisive objection. Spiritually speaking a man's thought must be the building in which he lives—otherwise everything is topsy-turvy.

Like Leporello learned literary men keep a list, but the point is what they lack; while Don Juan seduces girls and enjoys himself—Leporello notes down the time, the place and a description of the girl.

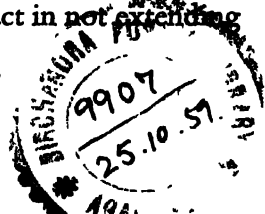
*The Two Ways.* One is to suffer; the other is to become a professor of the fact that another suffered.

The first is 'the way'; the second goes round about (the preposition 'about' is so aptly used for lectures and sermons) and perhaps it ends by going down.

Hey ho! Ecstatics—to sneeze is forbidden by our systematic philosophies just as it is forbidden in the ranks.

The method which begins by doubting in order to philosophize is just as suited to its purpose as making a soldier lie down in a heap in order to teach him to stand upright.

All the nonsense one hears about making experiments as opposed to *a priori* knowledge is all very well, but it cannot be denied that the conscientious judge who wished to try every form of punishment, in order to be the more justified in imposing it, showed a praiseworthy tact in not extending his experiments to the death sentence.





I always say: all honour to the sciences, etc.

But the thing is that bit by bit people have tried to popularize the scientific spirit, it has forced its way down among the people—true religiousness has gone to pot, and existential respect is lost.

Take a child. Instead of ordering it to deny itself on some particular point, people make it a speech on self-denial, perhaps an historical review of self-denial from particular aspects—the child would go quite mad. . . .

Nothing, nothing, nothing, no error, no crime is so absolutely repugnant to God as everything which is official; and why? Because the official is impersonal and, therefore, the deepest insult which can be offered to a personality.

A curious usage: 'personal' in the sense of an offensive remark. We are so far from everything personal (and yet that is the whole mystery of life), that something personal, talking personally to a person is being 'personal', i.e., insulting.

The life of mankind could very well be conceived as a speech in which different men represented the various parts of speech (that might also be applied to the nations in their relations to one another). How many people are merely adjectives, interjections, adverbs; and how few are substantives, verbs, etc., how many are copula. There are people whose position in life is that of the interjection, without influence in the sentence.—They are the hermits of life, and at the very most take a case, e.g., *O! me miserum*. Our politicians are like the Greek reciprocals (ἀλλήλων), which are wanting in the nominative singular and all subjective cases. They can only be thought of in the plural and in possessive cases.

The essence of pleasure does not lie in the thing enjoyed, but in the accompanying consciousness. If I had a humble spirit in my service, who, when I asked for a glass of water, brought me the world's costliest wines blended in a chalice, I should dismiss him, in order to teach him that pleasure consists not in what I enjoy, but in having my own way.

People hardly ever make use of the freedom which they have, for example, freedom of thought; instead they demand freedom of speech as compensation.

The crowd is composed of individuals, but it must also be in the power of each one to be what he is: an individual; and no one, no one at all, no one whatsoever, is prevented from being an individual unless he prevents himself—by becoming one of the masses.

Fundamentally, 'Hegel makes men into heathens, *into a race of animals gifted with reason*. For in the animal world 'the individual' is always less important than the race. But it is the peculiarity of the human race that just because the individual is created in the image of God 'the individual' is above the race.

This can be wrongly understood and terribly misused: *concedo*. But that is Christianity. And *that* is where the battle must be fought.

To stand on one leg and prove God's existence is a very different thing from going on one's knees and thanking him.

From a Christian point of view the whole of learned theology is really a corollary; and is declined like *mensa*.

The fact that God could create free beings *vis-à-vis* of himself is the cross which philosophy could not carry, but remained hanging therefrom.

Most people really believe that the Christian commandments (e.g., to love one's neighbour as oneself) are intentionally a little too severe—like putting the clock on half an hour to make sure of not being late in the morning.

Imagine a fortress, absolutely impregnable, provisioned for an eternity.

Then comes a new commandant. He conceives that it might be a good idea to build bridges over the moats—so as to be able to attack the besiegers. *Charmant!* He transforms the fortress into a country seat—and naturally the enemy takes it.

So it is with Christianity. They changed the method—and naturally the world conquered.

Christianity is certainly not melancholy; it is, on the contrary, glad tidings—for the melancholy; to the frivolous it is certainly not glad tidings, for it wishes first of all to make them serious.

That is the road we all have to take—over the Bridge of Sighs into eternity.

## II

### THE PRESENT AGE

The same new conditions under which on an average a levelling and mediocrizing of man will take place—a useful, industrious, variously serviceable and clever gregarious man—are in the highest degree suitable to give rise to exceptional men of the most dangerous and attractive qualities. For, while the capacity for adaptation, which is every day trying changing conditions, and begins a new work with every generation, almost with every decade, makes the *powerfulness* of the type impossible; while the collective impression of such future Europeans will probably be that of numerous, talkative, weak-willed, and very handy workmen who *require* a master, a commander, as they require their daily bread; while, therefore, the democratizing of Europe will tend to the production of a type prepared for *slavery* in the most subtle sense of the term: the strong man will necessarily in individual and exceptional cases become stronger and richer than he has perhaps ever been before—owing to the unprejudicedness of his schooling, owing to the immense variety of practice, art, and disguise. I meant to say that the democratizing of Europe is at the same time an involuntary arrangement for the rearing of tyrants—taking the word in all its meanings, even in its most spiritual sense.

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OUR age is essentially one of understanding and reflection, without passion, momentarily bursting into enthusiasm, and shrewdly relapsing into repose.

If we had statistical tables of the consumption of intelligence from generation to generation as we have for spirits, we should be astounded at the enormous amount of scruple

and deliberation consumed by even small, well-to-do families living quietly, and at the amount which the young, and even children, use. For just as the children's crusade may be said to typify the Middle Ages, precocious children are typical of the present age. In fact, one is tempted to ask whether there is a single man left who, for once, commits an outrageous folly.

Nowadays not even a suicide kills himself in desperation. Before taking the step he deliberates so long and so carefully that he literally chokes with thought. It is even questionable whether he ought to be called a suicide, since it is really thought which takes his life. He does not die *with* deliberation but *from* deliberation.

It would, therefore, be very difficult to prosecute the present generation because of its legal quibbles; in fact, all its ability, virtuosity and good sense consists in trying to get a judgment and a decision without ever getting as far as action. If one may say of the revolutionary period that it runs wild, one would have to say of the present that it runs badly. Between them, the individual and his generation always bring each other to a standstill, with the result that the prosecuting attorney would find it next to impossible to get any fact admitted because nothing ever happens. To judge from innumerable indications one would conclude that something quite exceptional had either just happened or was just about to happen. Yet any such conclusion would be quite wrong. Indications are, indeed, the only achievements of the age; and its skill and inventiveness in constructing fascinating illusions, or its burst of enthusiasm, using as a deceitful escape some projected change of form, must be rated as high in the scale of cleverness and of the negative use of strength as the passionate, creative energy of the revolution in the corresponding scale of energy. But the present generation, wearied by its chimerical efforts, relapses into complete indolence. Its condition is that of a

man who has only fallen asleep towards morning: first of all come great dreams, then a feeling of laziness, and, finally, a witty or clever excuse for remaining in bed.

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The world's deepest misfortune is the unhappy objectivity (in the sense of the absence of personality) characteristic of all speech and teaching, and that the one great mechanical discovery after the other has made it possible to expound doctrines impersonally in constantly increasing measure. There no longer exist human beings: there are no lovers, no thinkers, etc. By means of the press the human race has enveloped itself in an atmospheric what-not of thoughts, feelings, moods; even of resolutions and purposes, all of which are no one's property, since they belong to all and none. It is a torture to the soul to note the callous incorrigibility with which a human being can resort to wherever he thinks there is some truth to be had, for the sole purpose of learning to expound it, so that his music box may add this piece to its repertoire; but as for doing anything about it, the thing never even occurs to him.

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If the jewel which everyone desired to possess lay far out on a frozen lake where the ice was very thin, watched over by the danger of death, while closer in the ice was perfectly safe, then in a passionate age the crowds would applaud the courage of the man who ventured out, they would tremble for him and with him in the danger of his decisive action, they would grieve over him if he were drowned, they would make a god of him if he secured the prize. But in an age without passion, in a reflective age, it would be otherwise. People would think each other clever in agreeing that it was unreasonable and not even worth while to venture so far out. And in this way they would transform *daring and*

*enthusiasm* into a *feat of skill*, so as to do something, for after all 'something must be done'. The crowds would go out to watch from a safe place, and with the eyes of connoisseurs appraise the accomplished skater who could skate almost to the very edge (i.e., as far as the ice was still safe and the danger had not yet begun) and then turn back. The most accomplished skater would manage to go out to the furthestmost point and then do a still more dangerous-looking run, so as to make the spectators hold their breath and say: 'Ye gods! He is mad, he is risking his life.' But look, and you will see that his skill was so astonishing that he managed to turn back just in time, while the ice was perfectly safe and there was still no danger. As at the theatre, the crowd would applaud and acclaim him, surging homeward with the heroic artist in their midst, to honour him with a magnificent banquet. For intelligence has got the upper hand to such an extent that it transforms the real task into an unreal trick, and reality into a play. During the banquet admiration would reach its height. Now the proper relation between the admirer and the object of admiration is one in which the admirer is edified by the thought that he is a man like the hero, humbled by the thought that he is incapable of such great actions, and morally encouraged to emulate him according to his powers; but where intelligence has got the upper hand the character of admiration is completely altered. Even at the height of the banquet, when the applause was loudest, the admiring guests would all have a shrewd notion that the action of the man who received all the honour was not really so extraordinary, and that only by chance was the gathering for him, since after all, with a little practice, everyone could have done as much. Briefly, instead of being strengthened in their discernment and encouraged to do good the guests would more probably go home with an even stronger predisposition for the most dangerous, if also the most respectable, of all diseases: to

admire in public what they consider unimportant in private, since everything is made into a joke; and so, stimulated by the gush of admiration, they are comfortably agreed that they might just as well admire themselves.

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A quality is no longer related to its contrary, instead the partners both stand and observe each other and *the state of tension thus produced is really the end of the relationship*. For example, the admirer no longer cheerfully and happily acknowledges greatness, promptly expressing his appreciation, and then rebelling against its pride and arrogance. Nor is the relationship in any sense the opposite. The admirer and the object of admiration stand like two polite equals and observe each other. A subject no longer freely honours his king or is angered at his ambition. To be a subject has come to mean something quite different; it means to be a *third party*. The subject ceases to have a position within the relationship; he has no direct relation to the king but simply becomes an observer and deliberately works out the problem: i.e., the relation of a subject to his king. For a time committee after committee is formed, so long, that is to say, as there are still people who passionately want to be what they ought to be; but, in the end, the whole age becomes a committee. A father no longer curses his son in anger, using all his parental authority, nor does a son defy his father, a conflict which might end in the inwardness of forgiveness; on the contrary, their relationship is irreproachable, for it is really in process of ceasing to exist, since they are no longer related to one another within the relationship. In fact, it has become a problem in which the two partners observe each other as in a game, instead of having any relation to each other, and they note down each other's remarks instead of showing a firm devotion. More and more people renounce the quiet and modest tasks of life that are so important and



pleasing to God in order to achieve something greater; in order to think over the relationships of life in a higher relationship till in the end the whole generation has become a representation, who represent . . . it is difficult to say *who*; and who think about these relationships . . . for *whose* sake it is not easy to discover. A disobedient youth is no longer in fear of his schoolmaster—the relation is rather one of indifference in which schoolmaster and pupil discuss how a good school should be run. To go to school no longer means to be in fear of the master, or merely to learn, but it rather implies being interested in the problem of education. Again the differentiating relation of man to woman is never broken in an audaciously licentious manner; decency is observed in such a way that one can only describe these innocent borderline flirtations as trivial.

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The bourgeois mind is really the inability to rise above the absolute reality of time and space, and as such is therefore able to devote itself to the highest objects, e.g., prayer, at certain times and with certain words.

The opposite of the bourgeois mentality is really the Quaker religion (in its abstract significance), where it includes the uncertainty and chance which is found in the life of so many; altogether it is an annihilation of the historical process.

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The bourgeois always jump over one fact in life, which is why they are always a parody of those above them. . . . Morality is to them the highest, far more important than intelligence; but they have never felt enthusiasm for greatness, for talent even though in its abnormal form. Their *ethics* are a short summary of police ordinances; for them the most important thing is to be a useful member of the state,

and to air their opinions in the club of an evening; they have never felt homesickness for something unknown and far away, nor the depth which consists in being nothing at all, of walking out of Norreport with a penny in one's pocket and a cane in one's hand; they have no conception of the point of view (which a gnostic sect makes its own) of getting to know the world through sin—and yet they, too, say: one must sow one's wild oats; they have never even had a glimpse of the idea which is behind that saying, after one has forced one's way through the hidden and mysterious door into that 'dark realm of sighs', which in all its horror is only open to foreboding—when one sees the broken victims of seduction and inveiglement, and the tempter's coldness.



All that people say about a poet having to unfold a moral view of life in his works is, of course, nonsense when one looks more closely at it, like everything that most people say. The thing is this: they never escape from mediocrity, they never become great—not because they would not have liked that more than anything, even *per nefas*: i.e., consequently, not because they are morally mature, but because the tenor of their lives made it impossible for them. People would like the poet to describe how 'vaulting ambition' is reduced to misery, to nothing, that is what they call unfolding a moral point of view, and they desire it in order that, with the poet's help, their bourgeois lives might be cheered with this consolation and satisfaction: 'no, in that case it is better to be like us and become a bailiff, a magistrate, a J.P., a grocer, or a colonel in the territorials.'

Those who really have a moral attitude are perfectly able to endure that appearance in reality, and do not quarrel with the poet for depicting the enormous success of immorality, how it achieves greatness, and power—he sees through

all that and sees immorality, and that is enough for him.

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If the natural sciences had been developed in Socrates' day as they are now, all the sophists would have been scientists. One would have hung a microscope outside his shop in order to attract custom, and then would have had a sign painted saying: 'Learn and see through a giant microscope how a man thinks' (and on reading the advertisement Socrates would have said: 'that is how men who do not think behave').

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Every distinguished individual always has something one-sided about him, and this one-sidedness may be an indirect indication of his real greatness, but it is not that greatness itself. So far are we human beings from realizing the ideal, that the second rank, the powerful one-sidedness, is pretty much the highest ever attained; but it must never be forgotten that it is only the second rank. It might be urged that the present generation is, from this point of view, praiseworthy, in so one-sidedly aiming to express the intellectual and the scientific. My answer would be that the misfortune of the present age is not that it is one-sided, but that it is abstractly all-sided. A one-sided individual rejects, clearly and definitely, what he does not wish to include; but the abstractly all-sided individual imagines that he has everything through the one-sidedness of the intellectual. A one-sided believer refuses to have anything to do with thought, and a one-sided man of action will have nothing to do with science; but the one-sidedness of the intellectual creates the illusion of having everything.

The dialectic of antiquity tended towards leadership (the great individual and the masses—the free man and the slaves); so far the dialectic of Christendom tends towards representation (the majority sees itself in its representative and is set free by the consciousness that it is the majority which is represented, in a sort of self-consciousness); the dialectic of the present age tends towards equality, and its most logical—though mistaken—fulfilment is levelling, as the negative unity of the negative reciprocity of all individuals.

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Levelling can be accomplished by one particular cast, e.g., the clergy, the bourgeoisie, the peasants, by the people themselves. But all that is only the first movement of an abstract power within the concreteness of individuality.

In order that everything should be reduced to the same level it is first of all necessary to procure a phantom, its spirit, a monstrous abstraction, an all-embracing something which is nothing, a mirage—and that phantom is *the public*. It is only in an age which is without passion, yet reflective, that such a phantom can develop itself with the help of the press which itself becomes an abstraction. In times of passion and tumult and enthusiasm, even when a people desire to realize a fruitless idea and lay waste and destroy everything: even then there is no such thing as a public. There are parties and they are concrete. The press, in times such as those, takes on a concrete character according to the division of parties. But just as sedentary professional people are the first to take up any fantastic illusion which comes their way, so a passionless, sedentary, reflective age, in which only the press exhibits a vague sort of life, fosters this phantom. The public is, in fact, the real Levelling-Master rather than the actual leveller, for whenever levelling is only approximately accomplished it is done by something, but the public is a

monstrous nothing. The public is a concept which could not have occurred in antiquity because the people *en masse*, *in corpore*, took part in any situation which arose and were responsible for the actions of the individual, and, moreover, the individual was personally present and had to submit at once to applause or disapproval for his decision. Only when the sense of association in society is no longer strong enough to give life to concrete realities is the press able to create that abstraction 'the public', consisting of unreal individuals who never are and never can be united in an actual situation or organization—and yet are held together as a whole.

The public is a host, more numerous than all the peoples together, but it is a body which can never be reviewed, it cannot even be represented, because it is an abstraction. Nevertheless, when the age is reflective and passionless and destroys everything concrete, the public becomes everything and is supposed to include everything. And that again shows how the individual is thrown back upon himself.

The real moment in time and the real situation being simultaneous with real people, each of whom is something: that is what helps to sustain the individual. But the existence of a public produces neither a situation nor simultaneity. The individual reader of the press is not the public, and even though little by little a number of individuals or even all of them should read it, the simultaneity is lacking. Years might be spent gathering the public together, and still it would not be there. This abstraction, which the individuals so illogically form, quite rightly repulses the individual instead of coming to his help. The man who has no opinion of an event at the actual moment accepts the opinion of the majority, or if he is quarrelsome, of the minority. But it must be remembered that both majority and minority are real people, and that is why the individual is assisted by adhering to them. A public, on the contrary, is an abstraction.

To adopt the opinion of this or that man means that one knows that they will be subjected to the same dangers as oneself, that they will go astray with one if the opinion goes astray. But to adopt the same opinion as the public is a deceptive consolation because the public is only there *in abstracto*. Whilst, therefore, no majority has ever been so certain of being right and victorious as the public, that is not much consolation to the individual, for a public is a phantom which forbids all personal contact. And if a man adopts public opinion to-day and is hissed to-morrow, he is hissed by the public.

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A public is neither a nation, nor a generation, nor a community, nor a society, nor these particular men, for all these are only what they are through the concrete; no single person who belongs to the public makes a real commitment; for some hours of the day, perhaps, he belongs to the public—at moments when he is nothing else, since when he really is what he is, he does not form part of the public. Made up of such individuals, of individuals at the moments when they are nothing, a public is a kind of gigantic something, an abstract and deserted void which is everything and nothing. But on this basis anyone can arrogate to himself a public, and just as the Roman Church chimerically extended its frontiers by appointing bishops *in partibus infidelium*, so a public is something which everyone can claim and even a drunken sailor exhibiting a 'peep show' has dialectically absolutely the same right to a public as the greatest man; he has just as logical a right to put all those many noughts *in front* of his single number.

A public is everything and nothing, the most dangerous of all powers and the most insignificant: one can speak to a whole nation in the name of the public and still the public will be less than a single real man however unimportant.

The qualification 'public' is produced by the deceptive juggling of an age of reflection which makes it appear flattering to the individual who in this way can arrogate to himself this monster in comparison with which concrete realities seem poor. The public is the fairy story of an age of understanding which in imagination makes the individual into something even greater than a king above his people; but the public is also a gruesome abstraction through which the individual will receive his religious formation—or sink.

The press is an abstraction (since a paper is not a concrete part of a nation and only in an abstract sense an individual) which, in conjunction with the passionless and reflective character of the age, produces that abstract phantom: a public which in its turn is really the levelling power. Consequently it has an importance apart from its negative religious importance.

The fewer ideas there are at any time, the more indolent and exhausted by bursts of enthusiasm will it be; nevertheless, if we imagine the press growing weaker and weaker because no events or ideas catch hold of the age, the more easily will the process of levelling become a harmful pleasure, a form of sensual intoxication which flames up for a moment, simply making the evil worse and the conditions of salvation more difficult and the probability of decline more certain. Although the demoralization brought about by autocracy and the decay of revolutionary periods have often been described, the decay of an age without passion is something just as harmful though, on account of its ambiguity, it is less obvious.

It may not be without interest to consider this point. More and more individuals, owing to their bloodless indolence, will aspire to be nothing at all—in order to become the public: that abstract whole formed in the most ludicrous way, by all participants becoming a third party (an on-looker). This indolent mass which understands nothing

and does nothing itself, this gallery, is on the look-out for distraction and soon abandons itself to the idea that everything that anyone does is done in order to give it (the public) something to gossip about. That indolent mass sits with its legs crossed, wearing an air of superiority, and anyone who tries to work, whether king, official, school teacher or better type of journalist, the poet or the artist, has to struggle to drag the public along with it, while the public thinks in its own superior way that it is the horse.

If I tried to imagine the public as a particular person (for although some better individuals momentarily belong to the public they nevertheless have something concrete about them which holds them in its grip even if they have not attained the supreme religious attitude), I should, perhaps, think of one of the Roman emperors, a large well-fed figure, suffering from boredom, looking only for the sensual intoxication of laughter, since the divine gift of wit is not earthly enough. And so for a change he wanders about, indolent rather than bad, but with a negative desire to dominate. Everyone who has read the classical authors knows how many things a Caesar could try out in order to kill time. In the same way the public keeps a dog to amuse it. That dog is literary scum. If there is someone superior to the rest, perhaps even a great man, the dog is set on him and the fun begins. The dog goes for him, snapping and tearing at his coat-tails, allowing itself every possible ill-mannered familiarity—until the public tires, and says it may stop. That is an example of how the public levels. Their betters and superiors in strength are mishandled—and the dog remains a dog which even the public despise. The levelling is, therefore, done by a third party; a non-existent public levelling with the help of a third party which in its insignificance is less than nothing, being already more than levelled. And so the public is unrepentant, for it was, after all, not the public that acted but the dog; just as one says to children



—the cat's mother did it. The public is unrepentant; it was not really belittling anyone; it just wanted a little amusement. For had the levelling implement been remarkably energetic, the indolent public would have been fooled because the implement itself would have been in the way; but when their betters are held down by the insignificant and the insignificant by itself, then no one is quit of anything.

The public is unrepentant, for it is not they who own the dog—they only subscribe. They neither set the dog on anyone, nor whistle it off—directly. If asked they would answer: the dog is not mine, it has no master. And if the dog had to be killed they would say: it was really a good thing that bad-tempered dog was put away, everyone wanted it killed—even the subscribers.

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Complete publicity makes it impossible to 'govern'. All government is rooted in the thought that there are a certain few who have superior insight, who see so much farther into the future that they are able to govern. Complete publicity, on the other hand, is rooted in the thought that *all* should rule.

There are none who understand this better than the gentlemen of the press. No institution has been more anxious to set the seal of secrecy upon its entire domestic economy: the identity of its contributors, the nature of its purposes, etc., all the while insisting that the processes of government ought to be public. And quite consistently. For the underlying idea of the press has been to do away with 'government'—in order to secure the powers of government for itself; and for this reason it has also attempted to secure to itself the secrecy without which it is impossible to 'govern'.

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The following is the relation that exists between literature and the press. An author writes a clear, consistent, connected, fully matured presentation of some thought, perhaps the fruit of many years' labour. Nobody reads it. But a journalist reviews the book; in the course of half an hour or so, he writes something that is neither more nor less than pure nonsense. This is then supposed to be the purport of the author's book; moreover, everybody reads it. The significance of an author's existence thus becomes evident: he exists for the sake of affording some journalist an opportunity to write nonsense for everybody to read. Had there been no author the journalist would not have had this opportunity; *ergo*, it is of the utmost importance that the supply of authors should not fail.

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The cause of this terrible evil (the evil of the press) lies among other things in the following facts of human nature. The world is once for all ruled more by the fear of man than the fear of God. Hence the fear of becoming an individual, and hence also the tendency to conceal one's self behind some abstraction; hence anonymity, calling oneself 'we' and the like.

On the other hand, every outstanding individual is always an object of envy. Human envy cannot endure the thought that a mere individual should amount to anything, let alone that he should be pre-eminent, and exercise genuine leadership. Envy, therefore, favours the creation of abstractions; and over against an abstraction even the most eminent individual is lost in insignificance. This holds even when it is a notorious fact that the abstraction in question was created simply through some individual calling himself 'we'. Envy cannot stand the sight of superiority; hence it promotes the growth of abstractions, which are invisible.

And lastly, an abstraction is always *en rapport* with the

fantastic element in human nature, and the fantastic has a tremendous power. Even the most gifted individual is only an actuality, and as such finite; but 'we, the editors'—God only knows what capacities conceal themselves behind this sign.

*Summa summarum:* The human race ceased to fear God. Then came its punishment; it began to fear itself, began to cultivate the fantastic, and now it trembles before this creature of its own imagination.

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It must be obvious to everyone that the profound significance of the levelling process lies in the fact that it means the predominance of the category generation over the category individuality. In antiquity the total number of the individuals was there to express, as it were, the value of the outstanding individual. Nowadays the standard of value has been so changed, *equally*; approximately so and so many men go to one individual, and one need only be sure of having the right number in order to have importance. In antiquity the individual in the masses had no importance whatsoever; the outstanding individual signified them all. The present age tends towards a mathematical equality in which equally in all classes approximately so and so many people go to one individual. Formerly the outstanding individual could allow himself everything and the individual in the masses nothing at all. Now everyone knows that so and as many make an individual and quite consistently people add themselves together (it is called joining together, but this is only a polite euphemism) for the most trivial purposes. Simply in order to put a passing whim into practice a few people add themselves together, and the thing is done—then they dare do it. For that reason not even a pre-eminently gifted man can free himself from reflection, because he very soon becomes conscious of himself as a

fractional part in some quite trivial matter, and so fails to achieve the infinite freedom of religion. The fact that several people united together have the courage to meet death does not nowadays mean that each, individually, has the courage, for, even more than death, the individual fears the judgement and protest of reflection upon his wishing to risk something on his own. The individual no longer belongs to God, to himself, to his beloved, to his art or to his science; he is conscious of belonging in all things to an abstraction to which he is subjected by reflection, just as a serf belongs to an estate. That is why people band together in cases where it is an absolute contradiction to be more than one.

The abstract principle of levelling, like the biting east wind, has no personal relation to any individual but has only an abstract relationship which is the same for everyone. There no hero suffers for others, or helps them; the task-master of all alike is the levelling process which itself takes on their education. And the man who learns most from the levelling and himself becomes greatest does not become an outstanding man or a hero—that would only impede the levelling process, which is rigidly consistent to the end—he himself prevents that from happening because he has understood the meaning of levelling: he becomes a man and nothing else, in the complete equalitarian sense. That is the idea of religion. But, under those conditions, the equalitarian order is severe and the profit is seemingly very small; seemingly, for unless the individual learns in the reality of religion and before God to be content with himself, and learns, instead of dominating others, to dominate himself, content as priest to be his own audience, and as author his own reader, if he will not learn to be satisfied with that as the highest, because it is the expression of the quality of all men before God and of our likeness to others, then he will not escape from reflection.

For the levelling process is as powerful where temporary things are concerned as it is impotent where eternal things are concerned. Reflection is a snare in which one is caught, but, once the 'leap' of enthusiasm has been taken, the relation is a different one and it becomes a noose which drags one into eternity. Reflection is and remains the hardest creditor in existence; hitherto it has cunningly bought up all the possible views of life, but it cannot buy the essentially religious and eternal view of life; on the other hand, it can tempt people astray with its dazzling brilliance and dishearten them by reminding them of all the past. But, by leaping into the depths, one learns to help oneself, learns to love others as much as oneself, even though one is accused of arrogance and pride—because one will not accept help—or of selfishness, because one will not cunningly deceive people by helping them, i.e., by helping them to escape their highest destiny.

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A generation, a people, an assembly of the people, a meeting or a man are responsible for what they are and can be made ashamed if they are inconstant and unfaithful; but a public remains a public. A people, an assembly or a man can change to such an extent that one may say: they are no longer the same; a public, on the other hand, can become the very opposite and still be the same—a public. But it is precisely by means of this abstraction and this abstract discipline that the individual will be formed (in so far as the individual is not already formed by his inner life), if he does not succumb in the process: taught to be content, in the highest religious sense, with himself and his relation to God, to be at one with himself instead of being in agreement with a public which destroys everything that is relative, concrete and particular in life; educated to find peace within himself and with God, instead of counting hands; and the absolute

difference between the modern world and antiquity will be: that the totality is not concrete and is therefore unable to support the individual, or to educate him as the concrete should (though without developing him absolutely), but is an abstraction which by its abstract equality repels him and thus helps him to be educated absolutely—unless he succumbs in the process. The *taedium vitae* so constant in antiquity was due to the fact that the outstanding individual was what others *could not be*; the inspiration of modern times will be that any man who finds himself, religiously speaking, has only achieved what *everyone can achieve*.

\*   \*   \*

Every human being must be assumed in essential possession of what essentially belongs to being a man. The task of the subjective thinker is to transform himself into an instrument that clearly and definitely expresses in existence whatever is essentially human. To rely on a differential trait in this connection is a misunderstanding, for to have a little more brain and the like is insignificant. That our age has forsaken the individuals in order to take refuge in the collective idea has its natural explanation in the aesthetic despair which has not yet found the ethical. Men have perceived that it avails nothing to be ever so distinguished an individual man, since no difference avails anything. A new difference has consequently been hit upon; the difference of being born in the nineteenth century. Everyone tries to determine his bit of existence in relation to the age as quickly as possible and so consoles himself. But it avails nothing, being only a higher and more glittering illusion. And just as there have lived fools in ancient times, as well as in every generation, who have confounded themselves in the vanity of their delusion, with one or another distinguished man, pretending to be this or that individual, so the peculiarity of our age is that the fools are not even content to confuse

themselves with some great man, but identify themselves with the age, with the century, with the contemporary generation, with humanity at large. To wish to live as a particular human being (which is what everyone undoubtedly is), relying upon a difference, is the weakness of cowardliness; to will to live as a particular human being (which everyone undoubtedly is) in the same sense as is open to every other human being, is the ethical victory over life and all its illusions.

\* \* \*

It is quite impossible for the community or the idea of association to save our age. On the contrary, association is the scepticism which is necessary in order that the development of individuality may proceed uniformly, so that the individual will either be lost or, disciplined by such abstractions, will find himself religiously. Nowadays the principle of association (which at the most is only valid where material interests are concerned) is not positive but negative; it is an escape, a distraction and an illusion. Dialectically the position is this: the principle of association by strengthening the individual, enervates him; it strengthens numerically, but ethically that is a weaken- g. It is only after the individual has acquired an ethical outlook, in face of the whole world, that there can be any suggestion of really joining together. Otherwise the association of individuals who are themselves weak is just as disgusting and as harmful as the marriage of children.

When the generation, which itself desired to level and to be emancipated, to destroy authority and at the same time itself, has, through the scepticism of the principle of association, started the hopeless forest fire of abstraction; when as a result of levelling with this scepticism, the generation has hid itself of the individual and of everything organic and concrete, and put in its place 'humanity' and the numerical

equality of man and man: when the generation has, for a moment, delighted in this unlimited panorama of abstract infinity, unrelieved by even the smallest eminence, undisturbed by even the slightest interest, a sea of desert; then the time has come for work to begin, for every individual must work for himself, each for himself. No longer can the individual, as in former times, turn to the great for help when he grows confused. That is past; he is either lost in the dizziness of unending abstraction or saved for ever in the reality of religion.

For the development is, in spite of everything, a progress, because all the individuals who are saved will receive the specific weight of religion, its essence at first hand, from God Himself.' Then it will be said: 'Behold, all is in readiness, see how the cruelty of abstraction makes the true form of worldliness only too evident, the abyss of eternity opens before you, the sharp scythe of the leveller makes it possible for everyone individually to leap over the blade—and behold, it is God who waits. Leap, then, into the arms of God.'



### III

## THE AESTHETIC, THE ETHICAL, AND THE RELIGIOUS

It is just his fantastic dreams, his vulgar folly that he will desire to retain in order to prove to himself—as though that were so necessary—that men still are men and not the keys of a piano, which the laws of nature threaten to control so completely that soon one will be able to desire nothing but by the calendar. And that is not all: even if man really were nothing but a piano-key, even if this were proved to him by natural science and mathematics, even then he would not become reasonable, but would purposely do something perverse out of simple ingratitude, simply to gain his point. You will scream at me (that is, if you condescend to do so) that no one is touching my free will, that all they are concerned with is that my will shall of itself, of its own free will, coincide with my normal interests, with the laws of nature and arithmetic. Good heavens, gentlemen, what sort of free will is left when we come to tabulation and arithmetic, when it will all be a case of twice two makes four. Twice two makes four without my will. As if free will meant that.

DOSTOEVSKI

THE peculiarity of ancient tragedy is that the action is not only the result of the character, that the action is not reflected sufficiently into the subject, but that the action itself has a relative addition of suffering. Hence the ancient tragedy has not developed the dialogue to the point of exhaustive reflection, so that everything is absorbed in it; it has in the monologue and the chorus exactly the factors supplemental to the dialogue. Whether the chorus approaches nearer the epic

substantiality or the lyric exaltation, it thus still indicates, as it were, the more which will not be absorbed in the individuality; the monologue again is more the lyric concentration and has the more which will not be absorbed in action and situation. In ancient tragedy the action itself has an epic moment in it, it is as much event as action. The reason for this naturally lies in the fact that the ancient world did not have the subjectivity reflected in it. Even if the individual moved freely, he still rested in the substantial categories of state, family, and destiny. This substantial category is exactly the fatalistic element in Greek tragedy, and its exact peculiarity. The hero's destruction is, therefore, not only a result of his own deeds, but is also a suffering, whereas in modern tragedy, the hero's destruction is really not suffering, but is action. In modern times, therefore, situation and character are really predominant. The tragic hero is subjectively reflected in himself, and this reflection has not only reflected him out of every immediate relation to state, race, and destiny, but has often even reflected him out of his own preceding life. We are interested in a certain definite moment of his life, considered as his own deed. Because of this the tragedy can be exhaustively represented in situation and dialogue, since nothing of the more immediate is left behind. Hence, modern tragedy has no epic foreground, no epic heritage. The hero stands and falls entirely on his own acts.

This brief but adequate analysis may be useful in illuminating the difference between ancient and modern tragedy, which I regard as having great significance, the difference, namely, in the nature of tragic guilt. It is well known that Aristotle requires the tragic hero to have guilt. But just as the action in Greek tragedy is intermediate between activity and passivity (action and suffering), so is also the hero's guilt, and therein lies the tragic collision. On the other hand, the more the subjectivity becomes reflected, the more one sees,

the individual left Pelagian-ly to himself, the more his guilt becomes ethical. The tragedy lies between these two extremes. If the individual is entirely without guilt, then is the tragic interest nullified, for the tragic collision is thereby enervated; if, on the other hand, he is absolutely guilty, then he can no longer interest us tragically. Hence, it is certainly a misunderstanding of the tragic, when our age strives to let the whole tragic destiny become transubstantiated in individuality and subjectivity. One would know nothing to say about the hero's past life, one would throw his whole life upon his own shoulders, as being the result of his own acts, would make him accountable for everything, but in so doing, one would also transform his aesthetic guilt into an ethical one. The tragic hero thus becomes bad, the evil becomes precisely the tragic subject, but evil has no aesthetic interest, and sin is not an aesthetic element. This mistaken endeavour certainly has its cause in the whole tendency of our age toward the comic. The comic lies exactly in isolation; when one would maintain the tragic within this isolation, then one gets evil in all its baseness, not the truly tragic guilt in its ambiguous innocence. If one wished to represent an individual whom an unhappy childhood had influenced so disturbingly that this impression occasioned his downfall, such a defence would simply not appeal to the present age, and this naturally not because it was wrongly handled, for I have a right to assume that it would be handled with distinction, but because our age employs another standard. It would know nothing about such coddling; without knowing, it holds every individual responsible for his own life. Hence, if he goes to the dogs, it is not tragic, but it is bad. One might now believe that this must be a kingdom of the gods, this generation in which I have the honour to live. On the contrary, this is by no means the case; the energy, the courage, which would thus be the creator of its own destiny, aye, its own creator, is an illusion, and when the age loses the

*tragic, it gains despair. There lies a sadness and a healing power in the tragic, which one truly should not despise, and when a man in the extraordinary manner our age affects would gain himself, he loses himself and becomes comical. Every individual, however primitive he may be, is still a child of God, of his age, of his family and friends—herein lies its truth; if in this relativity he tries to be the absolute, then he becomes ridiculous.*



The comical is a relation, the faulty relationship of contradiction, but free from pain. Holophernes is said to be seven and one-fourth yards tall. The contradiction lies essentially in the fraction. The seven yards are fantastic, but the fantastic is not in the habit of speaking about quarter fractions; the quarter of a yard as a measure is reminiscent of reality. Whoever laughs at the seven yards does not laugh correctly, but he who laughs at the seven yards and a quarter knows what he laughs at. If a man wants to set up as an inn-keeper and he does not succeed, it is not comic. If, on the contrary, a girl asks to be allowed to set up as a prostitute and she fails, which sometimes happens, it is comic. And as it contains several contradictions it is, therefore, very comic.



The comical is brought out when the hidden inwardness comes into relationship with an environment, in that the religious individual comes to hear and see that which when brought into conjunction with his inward passion produces a comic effect. Hence, even when two religious individuals converse with one another, the one will produce a comic impression on the other, for each of them will constantly have his own inwardness in mind, and will now hear what the other says in the light of this, and hear it as comical, because neither dares directly to express the secret inward-

ness; at most they will entertain a suspicion of one another because of the humoristic undertone.

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After the ideal comes in the very next place the accidental. A wit has said that one might divide mankind into officers, serving-maids and chimney-sweeps. To my mind this remark is not only witty but profound, and it would require a great speculative talent to devise a better classification. When a classification does not ideally exhaust its object, a haphazard classification is altogether preferable, because it sets imagination in motion.

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An individuality full of longings, hopes, wishes, can never be ironical. Irony (as constituting a whole life) lies in the very reverse, in having one's pain just where others have their longings. Not to be able to possess the beloved is not irony. But to be able to possess her all too easily, so that she herself begs and prays to belong to one, and then not to be able to get her: that is irony. Not to be able to win the splendours of the world is never irony; but to have them, and in profusion, within one's reach, so that power and authority are almost forced upon one, and then to be unable to accept them: that is irony. In such cases the individuality must have a secret, a melancholy or the secret of a melancholy wisdom. That is why an ironical individuality cannot be understood by one who is full of longing, for the latter always thinks: if only one could have one's wish.

Irony is an abnormal growth; like the abnormally enlarged liver of the Strassburg goose, it ends by killing the individual.

★ ★ ★

Eros was the god of love, but he was not himself in love. In so far as the other gods or men felt the power of love in

themselves, they ascribed it to Eros, referred it to him, but Eros was not himself in love; and insofar as this happened to him once, this was an exception, and though he was the god of love, he stood far behind the other gods in the number of his love adventures, far behind men. The fact that he did once fall in love, best expresses the fact that he, too, bowed before the universal power of love, which thus in a certain sense became a force outside of himself, and which, rejected by him, now had no place at all where it might be found. Nor is his love based upon the sensuous, but upon the qualities of soul. It is a genuine Greek thought that the god of love is not himself in love, while all the others owe their love to him. If I imagined a god or goddess of longing, it would be a genuinely Greek conception, that while all who knew the sweet unrest of pain or of longing referred it to this being, this being itself could know nothing of longing. I cannot characterize this remarkable relation better than to say it is the converse of the representative relation. In the representative relation the entire energy is concentrated in a single individual, and the particular individuals participate therein, in so far as they participate in its particular movements. I might almost say that this relation is the opposite of that which lies at the basis of the Incarnation. In the Incarnation, the special individual has the entire fulness of life within himself, and this fulness exists for other individuals only in so far as they behold it in the incarnated individual. The Greek consciousness gives us the converse relation. That which constitutes the power of the god is not in the god, but in all other individuals, who refer to him; he is himself, as it were, powerless and impotent, because he communicates his power to the whole world. The incarnated individual, as it were, absorbs the power from all the rest, and the fulness is therefore in him, and only so far in the others as they behold it in him.

Strangely enough, the idea of a seducer was entirely wanting among the Greeks. It is by no means my intention, because of this, to wish to praise the Greeks, for, as is generally known, gods as well as men were indiscreet in their love affairs; nor do I censure Christianity, for it had, indeed, its only idea outside of itself. The reason the Greeks lacked this idea lay in the fact that the whole of the Greek life was posited as individuality. The psychical is thus the predominant, or is always in harmony with the sensuous. Greek love, therefore, was always psychical, not sensual, and it is this which inspires the modesty which rests over all Greek love. They fell in love with a girl, they set heaven and earth by the ears to get her; when they succeeded, then they perhaps tired of her, and sought a new love. In this instability they may, indeed, have had a certain resemblance to Don Juan. To mention only one instance, Hercules himself might surely produce a goodly list, when one considers that he sometimes took his whole family, which numbered some fifty daughters, and like a family son-in-law, according to some reports, had his way with all of them in a single night. On the other hand, he is still essentially different from a Don Juan, he is no seducer. When one considers Greek love, it is, according to its own ideas, essentially faithful, just because it is psychical; and it is accidental in the certain individual that he loves many, and with regard to the many he loves, it is again accidental every time he loves a new one; when he is in love with one, he does not think of the next one. Don Juan, on the contrary, is a seducer from the ground up. His love is not psychical but sensual, and sensual love, according to his conception, is not faithful, but absolutely faithless; he loves not one but all; that is to say, he seduces all. He exists only in the moment, but the moment is in its conception considered the sum of the moments, and so we have the seducer.

Chivalrous love is also qualified as soul, and therefore,

according to its own idea, is essentially faithful; only sensual love, according to its own concept, is essentially faithless. But this, its faithlessness, appears also another way; it becomes in fact only a constant repetition. Psychical love has the dialectic in it in a double sense. For partly it has the doubt and unrest in it, as to whether it will also be happy, see its desire fulfilled and be loved. This anxiety, sensual love does not have. Even a Jupiter is doubtful about his victory, and this cannot be otherwise; moreover, he himself cannot desire it otherwise. With Don Juan this is not the case; he makes short work of it, and must always be regarded as absolutely victorious. This might seem an advantage to him, but it is precisely poverty. On the other hand, psychical love has also another dialectic: it is, in fact, different in its relation to every single individual who is the object of love. Therein lies its richness, its perfect content. But such is not the case with Don Juan. For this, indeed, he has not time; everything for him is a matter of the moment only. To see her and to love her, that was one and the same. One may say this in a certain sense about psychical love, but in that there is only suggested a beginning. With regard to Don Juan it is valid in another way. To see her and to love her is the same thing; it is in the moment, in the same moment everything is over, and the same thing repeats itself endlessly. If one imagines a psychical love in Don Juan, it becomes at once ridiculous and a self-contradiction, which is not even in accord with the idea of positing 1,003 in Spain. It becomes an over-emphasis which acts disturbingly, even if one imagined oneself considering him ideally. Now, if we had no other medium for describing this love than language, we should be embarrassed, for as soon as we have abandoned the *naïveté* which in all simplicity can insist that there were 1,003 in Spain, then we require something more, namely, the psychical individualization. The aesthetic is by no means satisfied that everything should thus be lumped together, and



is astonished at the number. Psychical love does not exactly move in the rich manifold of the individual life, where the nuances are really significant. Sensual love, on the other hand, can lump everything together. The essential for it is woman in the abstract, and at most is a more sensual difference. Psychical love is a continuance in time, sensual love a disappearance in time, but the medium which exactly expresses this is music. Music is excellently fitted to accomplish this, since it is far more abstract than language, and, therefore, does not express the individual but the general in all its generality, and yet it expresses the general not in reflective abstraction, but in the immediate concrete.



The sensuous as principle is posited by Christianity, as is also the sensuous-erotic, as principle; the representative idea was introduced into the world by Christianity. If I now imagine the sensuous-erotic as a principle, as a power, as a kingdom qualified spiritually, that is to say, so qualified that the spirit excludes it; if I imagine this principle concentrated in a single individual, then I have a concept of the sensuous-erotic genius. This is an idea which the Greeks did not have, which Christianity first brought into the world, even if only in an indirect sense.

If this sensuous-erotic genius demands expression in all its immediacy, the question arises as to which medium is appropriate for the purpose. It must be specially emphasized that we demand its expression and representation in its immediacy. In its mediate and reflective character it comes under language, and becomes subject to ethical categories. In its immediacy, however, it can only be expressed in music. After the significance of music is revealed in its full validity, and it also reveals itself in a stricter sense as a Christian art, or rather as the art which Christianity posits in excluding it from itself, as being a medium for that which Christianity

excludes from itself, and thereby posits. In other words, music is the demoniac. In the erotic sensual genius, music has its absolute object.

Language involves reflection, and cannot, therefore, express the immediate. Reflection destroys the immediate, and hence it is impossible to express the musical in language; but thus apparent poverty of language is precisely its wealth. The immediate is really the indeterminate, and, therefore, language cannot apprehend it; but the fact that it is indeterminate is not its perfection, but an imperfection. This is indirectly acknowledged in many ways. Thus, to cite but one example, we say: 'I cannot really explain why I do this or that so and so, I do it by ear.' Here we often use a word . . . from music about things which have no relation to music, a word that is derived from music, but we indicate it by the obscure, the unexplained, the immediate.

Now if it is the immediate, apprehended in the spiritual categories, which receives its precise expression in music, we may again inquire more closely what species of the immediate it is which is essentially the subject of music. The immediate, qualified spiritually, may be determined so as to fall within the sphere of the spiritual, and then it may well find its expression in the musical, but this immediacy cannot be the absolute subject of music, for since it is determined in such a way as to be included under the spiritual, it is thereby indicated that music is in a foreign sphere, it constitutes a prelude which is constantly being annulled. But if the immediate, spiritually determined, is such that it falls outside the realm of spirit, then music here has its absolute subject. For the first species of the immediate, it is an unessential fact that it is expressed in music, and an essential fact that it becomes spirit, and, consequently, is expressed in language; for the second, it is essential that it is expressed in music, it cannot be expressed otherwise than in music, it cannot be

expressed in language, since it is spiritually determined so that it falls outside of the spiritual, and, consequently, outside of language. But the immediacy which is thus excluded by the spirit is sensuous immediacy. This belongs to Christianity. In music it has its absolute medium, and from this circumstance it is also possible to explain the fact that music did not really become developed in the ancient world, but belongs to the Christian era. Music is, then, the medium for that species of the immediate which, spiritually determined, is determined as lying outside of the spirit. Music can naturally express many other things, but this is its absolute subject.

#### THE ROTATION METHOD

The whole secret lies in arbitrariness. People usually think it easy to be arbitrary, but it requires much study to succeed in being arbitrary so as not to lose oneself in it, but so as to derive satisfaction from it. One does not enjoy the immediate, but something quite different which he can arbitrarily control. You go to see the middle of a play, you read the third part of a book. By this means you insure yourself a very different kind of enjoyment from that which the author has been so kind as to plan for you. You enjoy something entirely accidental; you consider the whole of existence from this standpoint; let its reality be stranded thereon. I will cite an example. There was a man whose chatter certain circumstances made it necessary for me to listen to. At every opportunity he was ready with a little philosophical lecture, a very tiresome harangue. Almost in despair, I suddenly discovered that he perspired copiously when talking. I saw the pearls of sweat gather on his brow, unite to form a stream, glide down his nose, and hang at the extreme point of his nose in a drop-shaped body. From the moment of making this discovery, all was changed. I even

took pleasure in inciting him to begin his philosophical instruction, merely to observe the perspiration on his brow and at the end of his nose.

The poet Baggesen says somewhere of someone that he was doubtless a good man, but that there was one insuperable objection against him, that there was no word that rhymed with his name. It is extremely wholesome thus to let the realities of life split upon an arbitrary interest. You transform something accidental into the absolute, and, as such, into the object of your admiration. This has an excellent effect, especially when one is excited. This method is an excellent stimulus for many persons. You look at everything in life from the standpoint of a wager, and so forth. The more rigidly consistent you are in holding fast to your arbitrariness, the more amusing the ensuing combinations will be. The degree of consistency shows whether you are an artist or a bungler; for to a certain extent all men do the same. The eye with which you look at reality, must constantly be changed. The painter Tischbein sought to idealize every human being into an animal. His method has the fault of being too serious, in that it endeavours to discover a real resemblance.



*Immediacy is fortunate*, for in the immediate consciousness there is no contradiction; the immediate individual is essentially seen as a fortunate individual, and *the view of life natural to immediacy* is one based on fortune. If one were to ask the immediate individual whence he has this view of life, he would have to answer with virginal *naïveté*, 'I do not myself understand it.' The contradiction comes from without, and takes the form of misfortune. The immediate individual never comes to any understanding with misfortune, for he never becomes dialectical in himself; and if he does not manage to get rid of it, he finally reveals himself as

lacking the poise to bear it. That is, he despairs, because he cannot grasp misfortune. Misfortune is like a narrow pass on the way; now the immediate individual is in it, but his view of life must essentially always tell him that the difficulty will soon cease to hinder, because it is a foreign element. If it does not cease, he despairs, by which his immediacy ceases to function, and the transition to another understanding of misfortune is rendered possible, that is, his despair may lead him to a comprehension of the suffering, and an understanding of it that grasps not only this or that misfortune, but essentially arrives at an understanding of the role of suffering in life.

Fortune, misfortune, fate, immediate enthusiasm, despair—these are the categories at the disposal of an aesthetic view of life. Misfortune is a happening in relation to the immediate consciousness (fate); viewed ideally, in the light of the view of life natural to immediacy, it is gone or it must go. This the poet expresses by investing immediacy with an ideality such as is never found in the finite world. Here the poet uses fortune. On the other side the poet, who must always operate within the compass of immediacy, causes the individual to be laid low by misfortune. This is the significance, understood quite generally, of the death of hero and heroine. But to comprehend misfortune, to come to an understanding with it, to turn everything upside down and to make suffering the point of departure for a view of life, is something that the poet cannot do; he ought not even to make a move in that direction, for then he is merely a bungler.

The inwardness that is the core of the ethical and ethico-religious individual understands suffering on the other hand as something essential. While the immediate individual involuntarily abstracts from misfortune, and fails to know that it is there as soon as it does not outwardly manifest itself, the religious individual has suffering constantly with him.

He requires suffering<sup>1</sup> in the same sense that the immediate individual requires fortune, and he requires and has suffering even in the absence of external misfortune; for it is not *misfortune that he requires, in which case the relationship would be aesthetic, and he would remain essentially undialectical in himself.*

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[Kierkegaard here described various kinds of good fortune, health, beauty, love reciprocated, wealth, power, etc., and various forms of prudence and cunning by which men procure themselves satisfactions and ward off grief. Now he goes on:]

I assume that the man who lived for his health was just as hale when he died as ever he was; that the noble couple danced at their golden wedding, and that a whisper of admiration passed through the hall just as it did when they danced on the day of their nuptials; I assume that the rich man's gold mines were inexhaustible, that honours and dignities followed the happy man's pilgrimage through life; I assume that the young girl got the man she loved, that the man of mercantile talent harnessed with his trade connections all quarters of the globe and held the purses of all the

<sup>1</sup> It is therefore an entirely correct religious collision, but at the same time a somewhat noteworthy aesthetic misunderstanding of the religious, when (for example in the Mohammedan Biblical legends published by Weil) the religious individual prays that he may be tried by great sufferings like those of Abraham, or some other of God's elect. Such a prayer is the bubbling over of the religious consciousness, in the same sense as an Aladdin's enthusiasm and a young woman's overweening happiness is a bubbling over of the immediate consciousness. The misunderstanding consists in the fact that the religious individual nevertheless views the suffering as coming from without, and hence aesthetically. In the stories cited it usually turns out that the religious individual proves too weak to be able to endure the suffering until the end. However, this does not explain anything, and such a result again marks a somewhat noteworthy consciousness lying on the borderline between the aesthetic and the religious.

world in his purse, that the mechanical talent succeeded in connecting heaven and earth—I assume that Nero never yawned, but that new pleasures surprised him every instant, that the cunning Epicurean could find delight in himself every instant, that the Cynic constantly has conditions to cast away in order to rejoice in his lightness—this I assume, and so all these people were happy. I will now make the opposite movement. Nothing of all this comes to pass. What then? Why, then, they despair. Let us see now why they despair. Is it because they discovered that what they built their life upon was transient? But is that, then, a reason for despairing? Has any essential change occurred in that upon which they built their life? Is it an essential change in the transitory that it shows itself to be transitory? Or is it not rather something accidental and unessential in the case of what is transitory that it does not show itself to be such? Nothing has happened which could occasion a change. So if they despair, it must be because they were in despair beforehand. The only difference is that they did not know it. But this is an entirely fortuitous difference. So it appears that every aesthetic view of life is despair, and that everyone who lives aesthetically is in despair, whether he knows it or not.

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The aesthetic and intellectual principle is that no reality is thought or understood until its *esse* has been resolved into its *posse*. The ethical principle is that no possibility is understood until each *posse* has really become an *esse*. An aesthetic and intellectual scrutiny protests every *esse* which is not a *posse*; the ethical scrutiny results in the condemnation of every *posse* which is not an *esse*, but this refers only to a *posse* in the individual himself, since the ethical has nothing to do with the possibilities of other individuals.

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It is possible to *be both* good and bad, as we say quite simply, that a man has tendencies to both good and evil. But it is impossible *at one and the same time to become both good and bad*. Aesthetically the requirement has been imposed upon the poet not to present these abstract patterns of virtue, or satanic incarnations of evil, but to follow Goethe's example and give us characters which are both good and bad. And why is this a legitimate demand? Because the poet is supposed to describe human beings as they *are*, and every human being is *both good and bad*; and because the medium of the poet is imagination, is *being* but not *becoming*, or at most becoming in a very much foreshortened perspective. But take the individual out of the medium of the imagination, the medium of being, and place him in existence: ethics will at once demand that he be pleased to become, and then he becomes—either good or bad. In the serious moment of self-examination, and in the sacred moment of the confessional, the individual takes himself out of the medium of becoming, and inquires in the medium of being, how it is with him; and, alas! the unfortunate result of this inquiry is that he is *both* good and bad. But as soon as he again enters the medium of becoming he becomes either good or bad. This *similia summarum*, that all men *are* both good and bad, does not concern ethics in the least. For ethics does not have the medium of *being*, but the medium of *becoming*, and consequently rejects every explanation of becoming which deceptively explains the coming within being, whereby the absolute decision that is rooted in becoming is essentially revoked, and all talk about it rendered essentially nothing but a false alarm.

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Aesthetically it is quite in order to wish for wealth, good fortune and the most beautiful of damsels; in short, to wish for anything that is subject to an æsthetic dialectic. But *at*



*the same time to wish* for an eternal happiness is doubly nonsense. Partly because it is *at the same time*, thus transforming an eternal happiness into something like a present on the Christmas tree; and partly because it is a *wish*, an eternal happiness being essentially relevant to an essentially existing individual, not related by an aesthetic dialectic to a romantically wishful individual.

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Ethically it is correct to put the question: 'Is it real?' But it is important to note that this holds true only when the individual subject asks this question of himself, and concerning his own reality. He can apprehend the ethical reality of another only by thinking it, and hence as a possibility.

The Scriptures teach: 'Judge not that ye be not judged.' This is expressed in the form of a warning, an admonition, but it is at the same time an impossibility. One human being cannot judge another ethically, because he cannot understand him except as a possibility. When, therefore, anyone attempts to judge another, the expression for his impotence is that he merely judges himself.

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It is intelligent to ask two questions: (1) Is it possible? (2) Can I do it? But it is unintelligent to ask these two questions: (1) Is it real? (2) Has my neighbour Christopher-son done it? It is fatuous from the aesthetic and the intellectual point of view to raise the question of reality; and the same holds true from the ethical point of view if the question is raised in the interest of contemplation. But when the ethical question is raised in connection with my own reality, I ask about possibility; only that this possibility is not an aesthetically and intellectually disinterested possibility, but as being a conceived reality it is related as a possibility to my own reality, so that I may be able to realize it.

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When Themistocles was rendered sleepless by thinking about the exploits of Miltiades, it was his apprehension of their reality as a possibility that made him sleepless. Had he plunged into inquiries as to whether Miltiades really had accomplished the great things attributed to him, had he contented himself with knowing that Miltiades had actually done them, he would scarcely have been rendered sleepless. In that case he would probably have become a sleepy, or at the most a noisy admirer, but scarcely a second Miltiades. Ethically speaking, there is nothing so conducive to sound sleep as admiration for another person's ethical reality. And again ethically speaking, if there is anything that can stir and rouse a man, it is a possibility ideally requiring itself of a human being.

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The sign of childishness is to say: '*Me wants, me-me*'; the sign of youth is to say: '*I*'—and '*I*'—and '*I*'; the sign of maturity and the introduction to the eternal is the will to understand that this '*I*' signifies nothing if it does not become the 'thou' to whom eternity unceasingly speaks, and says: 'Thou *shalt*, thou shalt, thou shalt.' The youth wishes to be the only '*I*' in the whole world; maturity consists in understanding this 'thou' for itself, even if it is not said to any other man. Thou shalt, thou shalt love thy neighbour.

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The aesthetic view takes account of the personality in its relation to the environment, and the expression for this relation in its repercussion upon the individual is pleasure. But the aesthetic expression for pleasure in its relation to the individual is mood. In mood the personality is present but only dimly present. For he who lives aesthetically seeks as far as possible to be absorbed in mood, he seeks to hide himself entirely in it, so that there remains nothing in him which cannot be inflected into it; for such a remainder has

always a disturbing effect, it is a continuity which would hold him back. The more the personality disappears in the twilight of mood, so much the more is the individual in the moment, and this, again, is the most adequate expression for the aesthetic existence: it is in the moment. Hence the prodigious oscillations to which a man who lives aesthetically is exposed. He, too, who lives ethically experiences mood, but for him this is not the highest experience; because he has infinitely chosen himself he sees the mood below him. The remainder which will not 'go into' mood is precisely the continuity which is to him the highest thing. He who lives ethically has memory of his life—and he who lives aesthetically has not. He who lives ethically does not annihilate mood, he takes it for an instant into consideration, but this instant saves him from living in the moment, this instant gives him mastery over the lust for pleasure, for the art of mastering lust consists not so much in annihilating it, or entirely renouncing it, as in determining the instant. Take whatever lust you will, the secret of it, the power in it, consists in the fact that it is absolutely in the moment. One often hears people say that the only remedy is for one to abstain from it entirely. This is a very wrong method, which also can be successful only for a short time. Imagine a man who is addicted to gambling. Lust awakens with all its passion; it is as if his life were in jeopardy if the lust were not satisfied. He is capable of saying to himself, 'This instant I will not do it, in an hour I will.' Then he is cured. This hour is the continuity which saves him. When a man lives aesthetically his mood is always eccentric because he has his centre in the periphery. Personality has its centre within itself, and he who has not his self is eccentric. When a man lives ethically his mood is centralized, he is not moody, he is not ~~in~~ a mood, but he has mood and he has mood in himself. What he labours for is continuity, and this is always master over mood. His life does not lack mood, yea, it has a

total mood, but this is acquired, it is what one might call *aequale temperamentum*, but this is no aesthetic mood, and no one has it by nature or immediately.

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The act of choosing is essentially a proper and stringent expression of the ethical. Whenever in a stricter sense there is a question of an either/or, one can always be sure that the ethical is involved. The only absolute either/or is the choice between good and evil, but that is also absolutely ethical. The aesthetic choice is either entirely immediate, or it loses itself in the multifarious. Thus, when a young girl follows the choice of her heart, this choice, however beautiful it may be, is in the strictest sense no choice, since it is entirely immediate. When a man deliberates aesthetically upon a multitude of life's problems, he does not easily get one either/or, but a whole multiplicity, because the determining factor in the choice is not accentuated, and because when one does not choose absolutely one chooses only for the moment, and therefore can choose something different in the next moment. The ethical choice is, therefore, in a certain sense much easier, much simpler, but in another sense it is infinitely harder. He who would define his life task ethically has ordinarily not so considerable a selection to choose from; on the other hand, the act of choice has far more importance for him. If you will understand me aright, I should like to say that in making a choice it is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses. Thereby the personality announces its inner infinity, and thereby, in turn, the personality is consolidated. Therefore, even if a man were to choose the wrong, he will nevertheless discover, precisely by reason of the energy with which he chose, that he had chosen the wrong.

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The reason why it seems to an individual as if he might constantly be changed and yet remain the same (as if his inmost nature were an algebraic sign which could signify anything whatever) is to be found in the fact that he is not correctly situated, has not chosen himself, has no conception of such a thing; and yet even in his lack of understanding there is implied a recognition of the eternal validity of the personality. He, on the other hand, who is correctly situated has a different experience. He chooses himself, not in a finite sense (for then this 'self' would be something finite), but in an absolute sense; and yet, in fact, he chooses himself and not another. This self which he then chooses is infinitely concrete, for it is in fact himself, and yet it is absolutely distinct from his former self, for he has chosen it absolutely. This self did not exist previously, for it came into existence by means of the choice, and yet it did exist, for it was in fact himself.

In this case choice performs at one and the same time the two dialectical movements: that which is chosen does not exist and comes into existence with the choice; that which is chosen exists, otherwise there would not be a choice. For in case what I chose did not exist but absolutely came into existence with the choice, I would not be choosing I would be creating; but I do not create myself, I choose myself. Therefore, while nature is created out of nothing, while I myself am an individual personality, am created out of nothing, as a free spirit I am born of the principle of contradiction, or born by the fact that I choose myself.

The man we are speaking of discovers now that the self he chooses contains an endless multiplicity, inasmuch as it has a history, a history in which he acknowledges identity with himself. This history is of various sorts; for in this history he stands in relation to other individuals of the race and to the race as a whole, and this history contains something painful, and yet he is the man he is only in consequence of this

history. Therefore, it requires courage for a man to choose himself; for at the very time when it seems that he isolates himself most thoroughly he is most thoroughly absorbed in the root by which he is connected with the whole. This alarms him, and yet so it must be, for when the passion of freedom is aroused in him (and it is aroused by the choice, as also it is presupposed in the choice) he chooses himself and fights for the possession of this object as he would for his eternal blessedness; and it is his eternal blessedness. He cannot relinquish anything in this whole, not the most painful, not the hardest to bear, and yet the expression for this fight, for this acquisition is . . . repentance. He repents himself back into himself, back into the family, back into the race, until he finds himself in God. Only on these terms can he choose himself, and he wants no others, for only thus can he absolutely choose himself. What is a man without love? But there are many sorts of love: I love a father and a mother differently, and every distinct sort of love has its distinct expression, but there is also a love by which I love God, and there is only one word in the language which expresses it . . . it is repentance. When I do not love Him thus, I do not love Him absolutely, do not love Him with my inmost being, and every other sort of love for the absolute is a misunderstanding, for (to take, for example, what is usually extolled most highly and which I myself hold in honour) when thought clings to the absolute with all its love, it is not the absolute I love, I do not love absolutely, for I love necessarily; as soon as I love freely and love God I repent. And if there might be any other reason why the expression for my love of God is repentance, it would be because He has loved me first. And yet this is an imperfect account of the reason, for only when I choose myself as guilty do I choose myself absolutely, if my absolute choice of myself is to be made in such a way that it is not identical with creating myself; and though it were the iniquity of the father which

passed by inheritance to the son, he repents of this as well, for only thus can he choose himself, choose himself absolutely; and, though tears were almost to blot out everything, he holds on to repentance, for only thus can he choose himself. His self is, as it were, outside of him, and it has to be acquired, and repentance is his love for this self, because he chooses it absolutely out of the hand of the eternal God.



Repetition and recollection are the same movement, only in opposite directions; for what is recollected has been, is repeated backwards, whereas repetition properly so called is recollected forwards. Therefore repetition, if it is possible, makes a man happy, whereas recollection makes him unhappy—provided he gives himself time to live and does not at once, in the very moment of birth, try to find a pretext for stealing out of life, alleging, for example, that he has forgotten something.

The love of recollection is the only happy one, an author has said. In that he is perfectly right, too—if one will only remember that it first makes a man unhappy. In truth, the love of repetition is the only happy love. Like that of recollection it has not the disquietude of hope, ~~the~~ anxious adventuresomeness of discoverers, nor the sadness of recollection; it has the blessed certainty of the instant. Hope is a new garment, starched and stiff and glittering, yet one has never had it on, and hence one does not know how it will become one and how it fits. Recollection is a discarded garment, which beautiful as it may be, does not fit, for one has outgrown it. Repetition is an imperishable garment, which fits snugly and comfortably, neither too tight nor too loose. Hope is a charming maiden but slips through the fingers, ~~re~~collection is a beautiful old woman but of no use at the instant, repetition is a beloved wife of whom one never tires. For it is only of the new one grows tired. Of the old

one never tires. When one possesses that, one is happy, and only he is thoroughly happy who does not delude himself with the vain notion that repetition ought to be something new, for then one becomes tired of it. It requires youth to hope, and youth to recollect, but it requires courage to will repetition. He who would only hope is cowardly, he who would only recollect is a voluptuary, but he who wills repetition is a man, and the more expressly he knows how to make his purpose clear, the deeper he is a man. But he who does not comprehend that life is a repetition, and that this is the beauty of life, has condemned himself and deserves nothing better than what is sure to befall him, namely to perish. For hope is an alluring fruit which does not satisfy, recollection is a miserable pittance which does not satisfy, but repetition is the daily bread which satisfies with benediction. When one has circumnavigated existence, it will appear whether one has courage to understand that life is a repetition, and is inclined to delight in it. He who has not circumnavigated life before beginning to live will never come to the point of living; he who circumnavigated it but grew tired had a poor constitution; he who chose repetition really lives. He does not run after butterflies like a boy; nor does he stand on tiptoe to peer at the glories of the world, for he knows them. Neither does he sit like an old woman at the spinning wheel of recollection, but he goes his way confidently, rejoicing in repetition. Indeed, if there were no repetition, what then would life be? Who would wish to be a tablet upon which time writes every instant a new inscription? or be a mere memorial of the past? Who would wish to let oneself be stirred by everything that is fleeting and new, whichever newly delights the effeminate soul? If God Himself had not willed repetition, the world would never have come into existence. He would either have followed the light plans of hope, or He would have recalled it all and conserved it in recollection. This He did not do, therefore



the world endures, and it endures for the fact that it is a repetition. Repetition is reality, and it is the seriousness of life. He who wills repetition is matured in seriousness.

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Love is presupposing love; to have love is to presuppose love in others; to be loving is to presuppose that others are loving. Let us understand each other. The characteristics a man may have may either be characteristics he has for himself, even if he makes use of them for others; or attributes for others. Wisdom is one quality inherent in himself; power and talent and knowledge and so on may also be attributes peculiar to himself. To be wise is not to say, not to assume, that others are wise; on the contrary, it may very certainly be true, if the truly wise man assumes that all men are far from wise. Moreover, because 'wise' is an exclusively personal attribute, there is nothing in the thought to prevent one from assuming that there might live, or has lived, a wise man who dared say that he assumed that all other men were unwise. In the thought (of being wise—and assuming that all others are unwise), there is no contradiction. In the realities of life, such an expression would be arrogant, but merely in the thought as such, there is no contradiction. On the other hand, if one were to believe that he himself was loving, but also that all other men were not loving, then we should have to say: 'No, stop; there is a contradiction here in the thought itself; for to be loving is just to assume, to presuppose, that other men are loving.' Love is not an exclusively personal attribute, but an attribute by virtue of which or in which you exist for others. In ordinary conversation we, of course, say, when we sum up a man's qualities, that he is wise, understanding, loving—and we do not notice what a difference there is between the last attribute and the first. His wisdom, his experience, his understanding are his own, even if others benefit by them; but if he is truly loving, then

he does not have love in the same sense as he has wisdom, but it is exactly his love which presupposes that the rest of us have love. You praise him as the lover; you believe love is an attribute he has, as it really is; you feel edified by him just because he is loving, but you do not notice that this is because his love indicates that he presupposes love in you, and that just for this reason you are edified, just for this reason the love in yourself is built up.

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As it is related to the individual life, history is of two kinds: external and internal. They are currents of two sorts with opposite movements. The first kind, again, has two sides. In the one case the individual has not that for which he strives, and history is the strife in which he acquires it. In the second case the individual has that for which he strives, yet cannot come into possession of it because there is constantly something which hinders him from doing so, and history is, then, the strife in which he triumphs over these hindrances. The second kind of history begins with possession, and history is the development through which one acquires possession. Since in the first case history is external and that towards which it strives lies outside, it has not true reality, and the poetic and artistic representation does quite right in shortening history and hastening on to the intensive moment. To stick to the subject which we have more particularly in hand, let us think of romantic love. Imagine, then, a knight who has slain five wild boars, four dragons, and delivered three enchanted princes, brothers of the princess whom he worships. In the romantic chain of reasoning this has complete reality. To the artist and the poet, however, it is of no importance at all whether there were five or only four monsters slain. The artist is, on the whole, more restricted than the poet, but even the latter will not be interested in relating circumstantially how the hero accom-

plished the destruction of each individual wild boar. He hastens on to the moment. He perhaps reduces the number, concentrates the toils and dangers with poetic intensity, and hastens on to the moment, the moment of possession. To him the whole historical succession is of comparatively little importance.

Where, however, it is a question of internal history, every little moment is of the utmost importance. Internal history is the only true history; but true history contends with that which is the life principle of history, i.e., with time. But when one contends with time, then the temporal and every little moment of it acquires for this fact immense reality. Whenever the internal process of blossoming in the individual has not yet begun and the individual is shut, there can only be external history. On the other hand, as soon as this blossoming, so to speak, springs out, internal history begins. Think now of the theme with which we started, the difference between the conquering and the possessive natures. The conquering nature is constantly outside himself, the possessive nature within himself; hence, the former has external history, the latter has internal history. But since external history is the one kind of history which can without detriment be concentrated, it is natural that art and poetry choose this especially for representation, and hence, choose likewise the unopened individual and everything that has to do with him. It is said, indeed, that love opens the individual, but this is not true when love is conceived as it is in romances. There the individual is merely brought to the point where he will open—with that it ends; or he is about to open but is interrupted. But since external history and the shut individuality will remain more especially the subjects for artistic and poetic representation, so, too, will everything which goes to compose the content of such an individuality be preferred. But substantially this is what belongs to the natural man. Here are a few examples. Pride

can very well be represented, for the essential point in pride is not succession but intensity in the moment. Humility is represented with difficulty, because here if anywhere we are dealing with succession, and whereas the beholder needs only to see pride in its culmination, in the other instance he properly requires what poetry and art cannot give, i.e., to see humility in its constant process of being, for it is essential to humility that it constantly remains, and when it is shown in its ideal moment the beholder senses the lack of something, because he feels that its true ideality does not consist in the fact that it is ideal in the moment but that it is constant. Romantic love can very well be represented in the moment, but conjugal love cannot, because an ideal husband is not one who is such once in his life but one who every day is such. If I would represent a hero who conquers kingdoms and lands, he can very well be represented in the moment, but a cross-bearer who every day takes up his cross cannot be represented either in poetry or in art, because the point is that he does it every day. If I would imagine a hero who stakes his life, it can very well be concentrated in the moment, but not the business of dying daily, for here the principal point is that it occurs every day. Courage can very well be concentrated in the moment, but not patience, precisely for the reason that patience strives with time.

Conjugal love begins with possession and acquires inward history. It is faithful. So is romantic love—but now note the difference. The faithful romantic lover waits, let us say, for fifteen years—then comes the instant which rewards him. Here poetry sees very rightly that the fifteen years can very well be concentrated. It hastens on, then, to the moment. A married man is faithful for fifteen years, yet during those fifteen years he has had possession, so in that long succession of time he has acquired faithfulness. But such an ideal marriage cannot be represented, for the point is time in its extension. At the end of the fifteen years he has apparently

got no further than he was at the beginning, yet he has lived in a high degree aesthetically. His possession has not been like dead property, but he has constantly been acquiring his possession. He has not fought with lions and ogres, but with the most dangerous enemy: with time. But for him eternity does not come afterwards as in the case of the knight, but he has had eternity in time. He alone, therefore, has triumphed over time; for one can say of the knight that he has killed time, as indeed a man constantly wishes to kill time when it has no reality for him. But this is never the perfect victory. The married man, being a true conqueror, has not killed time but has saved it and preserved it in eternity. The married man who does this, truly lives poetically. He solves the great riddle of living in eternity and yet hearing the hall clock strike, and hearing it in such a way that the stroke of the hour does not shorten but prolongs his eternity—a contradiction as profound but far more glorious than the situation described in a well-known tale of the Middle Ages which tells of an unhappy man that he awoke in hell and cried out, 'What time is it?' and the devil answered, 'An eternity.'



When death separates two friends, the survivor—faithful in the first moment, swears that 'he will never forget the dead'. Oh, how reckless! For truly, a dead man is a cunning man to talk with, except that his cunning is not like that of the one about whom we say: 'One can't always find him where one left him'; for the cunning of the dead consists precisely in the fact that we cannot get him away from the place where we left him. We are often tempted to believe that men have the idea that one can say almost anything one wishes to a dead man, because he is dead, hears nothing and answers nothing. And yet, be most cautious of all in what you say to the dead. You may, perhaps, say quite calmly to a

living man, 'I shall never forget you.' And then when some years have passed, then it is to be hoped that you have both fortunately forgotten the whole affair—at least it will be more seldom that you will be unlucky enough to meet a less forgetful man. But be cautious about the dead! For the dead is a man finished and decided; he is not like the rest of us, still in search of adventures, in which we may experience many exciting events, and seventeen times forget what we have said. When you say to a dead man, 'I shall not forget you' then it is as if he answered, 'Good! Rest assured that I shall never forget that you have said this.' And even if all your contemporaries were to assure you that he has forgotten it, you will never hear that from the mouth of the dead. No, he goes to his own place—but he is not *changed*. You cannot say to a dead man that it was he who had become older, and that this explains your changed relation to him—for a dead man does not become older. Nor can you say to a dead man that it was he who in the course of time became cold—for he is not colder than he was when you were so warm; nor that it was because he had become more ill-favoured that you could no longer love him—for he has not essentially become more ill-favoured than when he was a handsome corpse, which yet is not regarded as an object of love; nor that it was he who had become interested in others—for a dead man does not associate with others. No, whether you are willing to begin again where you left off or not, a dead man begins with the most punctilious exactness just there where you left off. For a dead man is, although one does not notice it, a strong man: he has the strength of unchangeableness. And a dead man is a proud man. Have you not noticed that a proud man, precisely in relation to the man he despises most, takes the most pains not to betray anything, to appear entirely unchanged, to pretend to be unconscious of everything, in order to allow the despised to sink lower and lower—for the proud man only benevolently

calls the attention of the one he loves to his error, in order by so doing to help him to the right! Oh, but a dead man—who is so proudly able as he to betray nothing at all, even if he despises the living who forgets him and the parting words?—a dead man even does everything to bring about his own oblivion. The dead does not come to you and remind you; he does not look at you in passing; you never meet him; and if you met him and looked at him, there is no involuntary expression in his face which against his will might betray what he thinks and judges about you; for a dead man has his countenance under control. Truly we should guard against conjuring forth the dead in a poetic way in order to call him to remembrance: the most fearful thing of all is that the dead betrays nothing at all. Fear, therefore, the dead, fear his shrewdness, fear his determination, fear his strength, fear his pride! But if you love him, then remember him affectionately, and you will have no reason to fear; you will learn from the dead, and precisely from him as the dead, the shrewdness of thought, the definiteness of expression, the strength of unchangeableness, the pride of life, as you could learn it from no man, not even the most richly endowed.

The dead man does not change; there is no thought of any possible excuse through moving the guilt on to him. Hence he is steadfast. Yes, that is true; but he has no actuality, and he therefore does nothing, simply nothing, to retain his hold on you, except that he does not change. If, then, any change enters into the relation between the living and the dead, then it must be clear that it is the living who has changed. If, on the contrary, no change enters, then it is the living who has truly been faithful, faithful in lovingly remembering him—alas, while he could do nothing to hold you; alas, while he was doing everything as if to pretend that he had entirely forgotten you, and what you said to him. For no one who has actually forgotten what has been said to him can express

more definitely that he has forgotten it, that its entire relation to him, that the whole matter, is forgotten, than the dead man can.

The work of love in remembering the dead is thus a work of the most disinterested, the freest, the most faithful love. So go out, then, and do this: remember the dead, and just by so doing learn to love the living, disinterestedly, freely, faithfully. In your relation to the dead you have a standard by which you can test yourself. The one who employs this standard will easily reduce the extensiveness of the most complicated relationship, and will learn to be repelled by all the mass of excuses actuality usually has immediately at hand for the purpose of showing that it is the other who is selfish, the other who is himself guilty of being forgotten, because he did not call himself to mind, the other who is faithless.

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A girl is secretly in love with a man, although neither have openly avowed their love. Her parents compel her to marry another (she is, perhaps, guided by filial piety) and she obeys her parents and conceals her love, 'to avoid making the other unhappy and so that no one will know what she is suffering.' By saying one word, a young bachelor could possess the object of his desires and his restless dreams; but this one little word might compromise and perhaps (who knows?) even ruin a whole family. Therefore he decides magnanimously to remain within his secret: 'She shall never know, and so she will perhaps be happy in marrying another.' It is the worst possible misfortune that these two young people, who are both concealed from the one they love, should really be concealed from each other: for otherwise they might have been able to bring about a remarkably higher unity. Their concealment is a free action and they are responsible for it to aesthetics. But aesthetics is a sentimental and courteous science and knows more ways out of a difficulty than a



pawnbroker. What does it do? It does everything it can for the lovers. By chance, therefore, they are both candidates for marriage and are advised of the magnanimous decision of the other; they explain what has happened, they marry each other at the same time; they assume the rank of real heroes. For although they have hardly had time to sleep over their heroic decision, the aesthetic regards them as though they had spent many years in a brave struggle for their ends. In fact, the aesthetic pays little attention to time, which passes by as speedily whether in jest or in earnest.

But ethics recognizes neither chance nor sensibility; nor has it such a swift conception of time. As a result the problem assumes another aspect entirely. There is nothing to be gained by arguing with ethics, for morality possesses pure categories. It does not invoke experience, which of all ridiculous things is about the most ridiculous and which, far from making men wise, sends them mad if they know nothing higher. Nor has ethics any use for chance; and so it does not end in explanations, it refuses to jest at dignities, lays heavy responsibilities on the puny shoulders of the hero, condemns as presumptuous both those who are in the mood to trifle with providence by their actions and those who are in the mood to do it with their sufferings. It invites you to believe in reality and to have the courage to fight against all the afflictions of reality, and especially those ghostly sufferings which men assume on their own responsibility; it warns you against those cunning calculations of reason which are even less trustworthy than the oracles of antiquity. It warns you against all untimely nobility: let reality make away with it; there will be time to show your courage, but ethics will give you all the assistance you require. Meanwhile if there is any deeper movement in the two lovers, if they regard their task in all earnestness and have the earnestness to begin it, the result will not be entirely fruitless, even though outraged ethics gives them no help; for they

possess a secret from ethics, one which they have acquired entirely at their own peril.

Therefore the aesthetic demanded concealment and regarded it; ethics demanded manifestation and punished the concealment.

But sometimes the aesthetic demands manifestation. When the hero ensnared in the aesthetic illusion intends to save another man by his silence, it demands silence and rewards it. On the other hand, when the hero's action cuts violently across another man's life, it demands manifestation. So we come to the tragic hero, and here for a moment I would like to examine the *Iphigenia in Aulis* of Euripides. Agamemnon is bound to sacrifice Iphigenia. Now, to this extent, the aesthetic demands silence, since it would be unworthy of a hero to seek consolation in another, just as he must also, for the sake of the women, conceal it from them as long as possible. Again, to be worthy of the name, the hero must pass through the terrible tribulation which is prepared for him by the tears of Iphigenia and Clytemnestra. What does the aesthetic do? It has a way out, it employs the expedient of priming an old servant to reveal everything to Clytemnestra. Then everything is in order.

Ethics, however, possesses neither chance nor an old servant. The aesthetic idea contradicts itself the moment it has to be carried out in reality. Ethics, therefore, demands manifestation. It is precisely by not being ensnared by any aesthetic illusion and by himself being the one to declare her fate to Iphigenia that the tragic hero proves his ethical courage. In doing this, he is the well-beloved son of ethics, the tragic hero in whom ethics is well pleased. If he remains silent, it may be because in this way he hopes to make it easier for others, but it may also be because he hopes to make it easier for himself. But he knows that he is free from this possibility. If he remains silent, he assumes his responsibility as the individual as long as he neglects arguments coming

from outside. As the tragic hero, however, it is impossible for him to remain silent and he is beloved of ethics precisely because he always expresses the universal. His heroism demands courage, but this courage also requires of him that he should refuse to evade any of the arguments. Now, as everyone knows, tears are a terrible *argumentum ad hominem*, and even those who are moved by nothing else are moved by tears. In the play Iphigenia can have recourse to tears; in reality she should be allowed two months for tears, like the daughter of Jephthah, crying, not alone, but at the feet of her father, employing all her art 'fashioned only of tears' and twining herself for an olive branch around his knees. (*Iphigenia in Aulis*, 1224.)

The aesthetic demanded manifestation, but helped itself along by using chance; ethics demanded manifestation and found its satisfaction in the tragic hero.



A man cannot in reason embark upon 'the voluntary' (the requirements of which are higher than the universal requirements) unless he has an *immediate* certainty that it is required of him *in particular*. . . . From the point of view of the universal requirements 'the voluntary' is, in fact, presumption; and consequently one must have an immediate certainty that the particular is required of one in order to be able to risk embarking upon it.

In order really to be a great genius a man must be the exception. But in order that his being exceptional should be a serious matter he himself must be unfree, forced into the position. There lies the importance of his dementia. There is a definite point in which he suffers; it is impossible for him to run with the herd. That is his torture. Perhaps his dementia has nothing whatsoever to do with his real genius, but it is the pain by which he is nailed out in isolation—and he must be isolated if he is to be great; and no man can

freely isolate himself; he must be compelled if it is to be a serious matter.

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On the one side stands the exception, on the other the universal, and the strife itself is a strange conflict between the wrath and impatience of the universal at the hubbub the exception causes, and its amatory predilection for the exception. For fundamentally the universal rejoices just as much over the exception as heaven rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, more than over the ninety and nine just persons. On the other side the insubordination and defiance of the exception is in conflict with its weakness and morbidity. The whole thing is a wrestling match in which the universal breaks with the exception, breaks with it in strife, and strengthens it by this conflict. If the exception is unable to endure the distress, the universal does not help it, any more than heaven helps a sinner who cannot endure the pain of repentance. The earnest and resolute exception (which, though in conflict with the universal, is nevertheless a scion from its root) maintains itself. The situation is as follows. The exception thinks also the universal when it thinks itself, it labours also for the universal when it elaborates itself, it explains the universal when it explains itself, and if one would study the universal thoroughly, one has only to look for the justified exception, which manifests everything more clearly than does the universal itself. The justified exception is reconciled with the universal; the universal is fundamentally polemical against the exception, for it will not evince its predilection before the exception, so to speak, compels it to admit it. If the exception does not possess this power, it is not justified, and therefore it is very shrewd of the universal not to evince its predilection too early. If heaven loves one sinner more than ninety and nine just persons, the sinner doubtless does not know this from the beginning; on the

contrary, he is sensible only of heaven's wrath, until at last he, as it were, compels heaven to speak out.

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If a man can be said to be situated absolutely teleologically, then he is an Apostle. The doctrine communicated to him is not a task which he is given to ponder over, it is not given him for his own sake, he is, on the contrary, on a mission and has to proclaim the doctrine and use authority. Just as a man, sent into the town with a letter, has nothing to do with its contents, but has only to deliver it; just as a minister who is sent to a foreign court is not responsible for the content of the message, but has only to convey it correctly: so, too, an Apostle has really only to be faithful in his service and to carry out his task. Therein lies the essence of an Apostle's life of self-sacrifice, even if he were never persecuted, in the fact that he is 'poor, yet making many rich', that he never dares take the time or the quiet or carefreeness in order to grow rich. Intellectually speaking he is like a tireless housewife who herself hardly has time to eat so busy is she preparing food for others. And even though at first he might have hoped for a long life, his life to the very end will remain unchanged, for there will always be new people to whom to proclaim the doctrine. Although a revelation is a paradoxical factor which surpasses man's understanding, one can nevertheless understand this much, which has, moreover, proved to be the case everywhere: that a man is called by a revelation to go out in the world, to proclaim the Word, to act and to suffer, to a life of uninterrupted activity as the Lord's messenger. But that a man should be called by a revelation to sit back and enjoy his possessions undisturbed, in active literary *far niente*, momentarily clever and afterwards as publisher and editor of the uncertainties of his cleverness: that is something approaching blasphemy.

It is otherwise with genius; it has only an immanent

teleology, it develops itself, and while developing itself this self-development projects itself at its work. It thus receives importance, perhaps even great importance, but it is not teleologically situated in regard to the world and to others. Genius lives in itself; and, humorously, might live withdrawn and self-satisfied, without for that reason taking its gifts in vain, so long as it develops itself earnestly and industriously, following its own genius, regardless of whether others profit by it or not. Genius is therefore in no sense inactive, and works within itself perhaps harder than ten business men, but none of its achievements have any exterior *telos*. That is at once the humanity and the pride of genius: the humanity lies in the fact that it does not define itself teleologically in relation to any other man, as though there were anyone who needed it; its pride lies in the fact that it immanently relates itself to itself. It is modest of the nightingale not to require anyone to listen to it; but it is also proud of the nightingale not to care whether anyone listens to it or not. The dialectic of genius will give particular offence in our times, where the masses, the many, the public, and other such abstractions contrive to turn everything topsy-turvy. The honoured public, the domineering masses, wish genius to express that it exists for their sake; they only see one side of the dialectic of genius, take offence at its pride and do not perceive that the same thing is also modesty and humility. The honoured public and the domineering masses would therefore also take the existence of an Apostle in vain. For it is certainly true that he exists absolutely for the sake of others, is sent out for the sake of others; but it is not the masses and not mankind and not the public, not even the highly-educated public, which is his lord and master—but God; and the Apostle is one who has divine authority to command both the masses and the public.

The humorous self-sufficiency of genius is the unity of a modest resignation in the world and a proud elevation above

the world: of being an unnecessary superfluity and a precious ornament. If the genius is an artist, then he accomplishes his work of art, but neither he nor his work of art have a *telos* outside him. Or he is an author, who abolishes every teleological relation to his environment and humorously defines himself as a poet. Lyrical art has certainly no *telos* outside it: and whether a man writes a short lyric or folios it makes no difference to the quality of the nature of his work. The lyrical author is only concerned with his production, enjoys the pleasure of producing, often perhaps only after pain and effort; but he has nothing to do with others, he does not write *in order that*; in order to enlighten men or in order to help them along the right road, in order to bring about something; in short, he does not write *in order that*. The same is true of every genius. No genius has an *in order that*; the Apostle has absolutely and paradoxically an *in order that*.



A religious poet is in a peculiar position. Such a poet will seek to establish a relation to the religious through the imagination; but for this very reason he succeeds only in establishing an aesthetic relationship to something aesthetic. To hymn a hero of faith is quite as definitely an aesthetic task as it is to eulogize a war hero. If the religious is in truth the religious, if it has submitted itself to the discipline of the ethical and preserves it within itself, it cannot forget that religious pathos does not consist in singing and hymning and composing verses, but in existing; so that the poetic productivity, if it does not cease entirely, or if it flows as richly as before, comes to be regarded by the individual himself as something accidental, which goes to prove that he understands himself religiously. Aesthetically it is the poetic productivity which is essential, and the poet's mode of existence is accidental.

## A POET'S CONFESSION

The cause of his suffering is that he always wants to be religious and always goes the wrong way about it and remains a poet: consequently he is unhappily in love with God.

## ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

## I

It was early morning. Abraham arose and had the asses saddled, he left the tent and Isaac with him, but Sara watched from the casement as they went down the valley until they disappeared from sight. For three days they rode in silence and on the morning of the fourth day Abraham said not a word but lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah afar off. He left his servants behind him and led Isaac by the hand as they climbed the mountain alone. But Abraham said to himself, 'I cannot hide from Isaac where this path is leading him.' He stood still, he laid his hand on Isaac's head in blessing and Isaac bowed down to receive the blessing. And Abraham's countenance was that of a father, his eyes gentle, his voice encouraging. But Isaac could not understand him, his soul could not rise to him; he embraced Abraham's knees, he prayed at his feet, implored him to save his young life for the bright promise of the future, reminded him of the joy of Abraham's tent, spoke of sorrow and loneliness. Then Abraham lifted him up and led him by the hand and his words were full of consolation and encouragement. But Isaac could not understand him. Abraham climbed Mount Moriah, but Isaac did not understand him. For a moment Abraham turned his face away from his son and when Isaac saw his face again, it had changed, his eyes were wild and he was terrible to look upon. He seized Isaac by the shoulders and threw him to the ground and said, 'Foolish youth, do



you believe that I am your father? I am an idol-worshipper. Do you believe it is God's command? No, it is my own pleasure!' Then Isaac trembled and cried out in terror, 'God in Heaven, have mercy on me! God of Abraham, have mercy on me! I have no father on earth, be thou my father!' And Abraham said softly to himself, 'Father in Heaven, I thank thee. It is better that he should believe me inhuman than that he should lose faith in thee.'

## II

It was early morning; Abraham arose and embraced Sara, the bride of his old age, and Sara kissed Isaac, who had preserved her from shame, who was her pride, her hope in all posterity. So they rode in silence along the road and Abraham's gaze was fixed upon the ground until the fourth day, when he lifted up his eyes and saw Mount Moriah afar off, but his eyes again turned to the earth. Silently he arranged the wood and bound Isaac, silently he drew the knife; then he saw the ram which God had chosen. He sacrificed it and returned home. . . . From that day Abraham grew old, he could not forget that God had demanded this of him. Isaac prospered as before, but Abraham's eyes were darkened and he knew no more joy.

## III

It was early morning; Abraham arose and kissed Sara, the young mother, and Sara kissed Isaac, her joy, her delight in all time. And Abraham rode away, deep in thought, thinking of Hagar and the son he had sent into the wilderness. He climbed Mount Moriah, he drew the knife.

One evening, when all was quiet, Abraham rode out alone and rode to Mount Moriah: he threw himself on his face, he prayed God to forgive him his sin, to forgive him

for having wanted to sacrifice Isaac, to forgive him for having forgotten his fatherly duty towards his son. Frequently he rode his lonely way, but he did not find rest. He could not conceive that it was a sin to have wished to sacrifice to God his most precious possession when he would have given his life many times over for the sake of his son; and if this was a sin, if he had not loved Isaac in this way, then he could not understand that it could be forgiven. And could any sin be more terrible?

## IV

It was early morning; everything was ready for the journey in Abraham's house. He bade farewell to Sara, and Eliezar, the faithful servant, followed him on the way until at last he turned back. They rode together in peace, Abraham and Isaac, until they came to Mount Moriah. But Abraham prepared everything for the sacrifice, gently and quietly, but when he turned aside and drew the knife, then Isaac saw that his left hand was clenched in despair and that a shudder passed through his body—but Abraham drew the knife.

Then they returned home and Sara hastened to meet them; but Isaac had lost his faith. No word of this has ever been mentioned in the world, and Isaac never spoke to anyone of what he had seen and Abraham never suspected that anyone had seen it.



Abraham did not speak. He spoke neither to Sara nor to Eliezar nor Isaac. He passed over the three ethical instances; for ethics had for him no higher expression than the life of the family.

The aesthetic allowed and even demanded that the individual should remain silent, when by remaining silent he could

save anyone. This in itself ought to be sufficient to show that Abraham does not stand within the domain of aesthetics. He does not remain silent in order to save Isaac, and, moreover, his whole task, which is to sacrifice Isaac for his own and for God's sake, is an offence in the eyes of aesthetics; for aesthetics can easily understand when I sacrifice myself, but not when I sacrifice another for my own sake. The aesthetic hero was silent. Ethics, however, condemned him, because he was silent by virtue of the accident of his individuality. It was human foresight which determined his silence. This is precisely what ethics cannot forgive, all human knowledge of this sort being no more than an illusion, while ethics demands an infinite movement, demands manifestation. The aesthetic hero can therefore speak, but he does not wish to.

The real tragic hero sacrifices himself and everything he possesses for the universal. Everything he does, all his emotions belong to the universal; he is made manifest and in this manifestation he is the well-beloved son of ethics. But this does not fit the case of Abraham, who does nothing for the universal and remains concealed.

So we stand in the presence of the paradox. Either the individual as the individual can stand in an absolute relation to the absolute, and then ethics is not supreme, or Abraham is lost; he is neither a tragic hero nor an aesthetic hero.

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Science does, indeed, deal with and explain existence, including man's relation to God. But of such a sort that it has place for a probation, which when conceived in the does not exist, but exists only for the i

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Ethics is as such the universal, and a

valid for all, which may be expressed in another way by saying that it is valid at every moment. It rests immanent in itself, having nothing outside itself which is its *telos*, being itself the *telos* of everything outside itself, and once this has been integrated in ethics, it goes no further. Defined as a being, immediate, physical, and spiritual, the individual is the individual who has his *telos* in the universal and his ethical task is to express himself continually in the universal, to strip himself of his individuality in order to become the universal. As soon as the individual desires to assert his individuality over against the universal, he sins and he can only become reconciled with the universal again by recognizing it. Each time the individual, after entering the universal, feels compelled to assert himself as individual, he is in a tribulation from which he cannot escape except by repentance and by renouncing himself as individual in the universal. If this is the highest that can be said of man and his existence, then morality is of the same nature as man's eternal blessedness, which is his *telos* in all eternity and at every moment, for it would be a contradiction to let it be abandoned (i.e., teleologically suspended), since, as soon as it is suspended, it is lost, while that which is suspended is not lost, but remains preserved in the higher sphere which is its *telos*.

If this is so, then Hegel is right in his chapter on 'Conscience and the Good'<sup>1</sup>, where he defines man solely as the individual, and he is right in considering this definition as a 'moral form of evil' (cf. especially *The Philosophy of Law*) which must be suppressed in the teleology of morals, so that the individual who remains at this stage either sins or endures tribulation. On the other hand, Hegel is wrong in speaking about faith and wrong in not protesting loudly and clearly against the respect and admiration enjoyed by

<sup>1</sup> The Chapter on the conscience and the good appears in the *Philosophie des Rechts*, pp. 129-41.

Abraham as the father of faith, when he should have been brought to trial and banished as a murderer.

For faith is this paradox, that the individual is superior to the universal, but in such a way, however, that the movement repeats itself, and therefore in such a way that the individual, after he has once been in the universal, then as individual isolates himself as superior to the universal. If this is not faith, then Abraham is lost, then faith has never existed in the world, precisely because it always has existed. For if ethics (i.e., morality) is the highest, and nothing incommensurable remains in man except it be evil (i.e., the particular which ought to be expressed in the universal), then there is no need for any other categories besides those of Greek philosophy and those which can be logically deduced from them. Hegel ought never to have concealed this; for, after all, he had read the Greeks.



I can, I think, describe the movements of faith perfectly, but I can never perform them. When you are learning to swim, they allow you to support yourself on traces hung from the roof: you describe the movements perfectly, but you are not swimming. In the same way I can describe the movements of faith, and when I am thrown into the water, it is true that I swim (for I refuse to wade in the shallows), but I am describing altogether different movements; I am making the movements of infinity; while faith makes the contrary movements and describes those of finiteness after making the movements of infinity. Blessed is he who can make these movements, for he performs a miracle, and I shall never grow tired of admiring him; it is the same to me whether he is Abraham or the slave in Abraham's house, whether he is a professor of philosophy or a poor servant-girl, for I have regard only for the movements he makes. But I watch them closely: I refuse to be deceived, either by

myself or by anyone else.<sup>4</sup> The knights of infinite resignation can be easily distinguished by the hovering and daring of their gait, but those who bear the jewel of faith are not so easily recognizable, because in their outward appearance they bear a striking resemblance to a class of people which is bitterly despised by faith and infinite resignation alike—they bear a close resemblance to the narrow bourgeoisie.

Let me say frankly that I have never, in the course of my experience, seen a reliable example of the knight of faith, but I do not for a moment deny that every other man may be such a knight. Meanwhile I have spent years searching for him in vain. Men are accustomed to travelling the world, looking for rivers and mountains, new stars, birds of gay-coloured plumage, monstrous fishes, ridiculous races of men; they abandon themselves to an animal stupor and gaze open-mouthed at life, believing that they have seen something. None of these things interest me at all. But if I knew where there lived a single knight of faith, I would make a pilgrimage on foot to greet him; for this is the miracle which occupies my thoughts exclusively. Not for a moment would I let him out of my sight; I would watch how he performed each movement and consider myself made for life; I would divide my time between watching him and practising the movements he made, and thus spend all my time in admiring him. As I have said, I have never discovered a knight of the faith, but I can easily imagine one. Here he is. I make his acquaintance, I am introduced to him. And the moment I lay eyes on him, I push him away and leap back suddenly, clap my hands together and say half aloud: 'Good God! Is this really he? Why, he looks like an Inspector of Taxes!' But it is really he. I draw closer to him, I watch every movement he makes to see whether he shows any sign of the least telegraphic communication with the infinite, a glance, a look, a gesture, an air of melancholy, a smile to betray the contrast of infinity and the finite. But no! I examine him

from head to foot, hoping to discover a chink through which the infinite can peer. But no! He is completely solid. How does he walk? Firmly. He belongs wholly to the finite; and there is no townsman dressed in his Sunday best, who spends his Sunday afternoon in Frederiksberg, who treads the earth more firmly than he; he belongs altogether to the earth, no bourgeois more so. In him you will find no trace of that exquisite exclusiveness which distinguishes the knight of the infinite. He takes pleasure in all things, takes part in everything, and everything he does, he does with the perseverance of earthly men whose souls hang fast to what they are doing. He does his job thoroughly. At first glance you would think he was a clerk who had lost his soul to double-entry bookkeeping, so punctilious he is. On Sundays he takes a holiday. He goes to church. No heavenly glance, no sign of incommensurability betrays him; and without knowing him it would be impossible to distinguish him from the rest of the congregation, for his healthy bellowing of the psalms proves only that he has got a sound pair of lungs. During the afternoons he walks out to the woods. His heart rejoices over everything he sees, the crowds, the new omnibuses, the Sound. If you met him on the *Strandvej*, you would think he was a shopkeeper having a good time, his delight being of that kind: for he is not a poet and I have tried in vain to detect in him any sign of poetic incommensurability. When he comes home in the evening, he walks as sturdily as a postman. On his way he thinks about the special hot dish which his wife has been preparing for him, a grilled lamb's head garnished with herbs perhaps. If he meets someone similarly disposed, he is quite capable of walking as far as Østerport if only he can discuss the dish, and he will discuss it with a passion which would give credit to a *maître d'hôtel*. As it happens he has not fourpence to spare: but he still believes that his wife has a hot meal waiting for him. If she has, it will be an enviable sight

for distinguished people and an inspiring one for common folk to see him eat; for his appetite is stronger than Esau's. If his wife has not prepared it, he remains—oddly enough—unmoved. On his way he comes to a building site and meets another man. They begin talking and before you can say jack-knife, he has erected a new building, himself disposing of all that is necessary. The stranger will leave him, thinking he has met a capitalist, while the knight will be marvelling at the thought that if it really came to the point, nothing would be easier. He leans out of the window and looks across the square in which he lives. He is interested in everything he sees, even if it is only a rat creeping into a gutter hole or children playing; he regards life as peacefully as a girl of sixteen. Yet he is not a genius, and I have tried in vain to detect in him the incommensurability of genius. In the evening he smokes his pipe, and to see him you would swear that he was the butcher from over the way, vegetating in the evening twilight. He is as free from cares as any ne'er-do-well, but every moment of his life he purchases his leisure at the highest price; for he makes not the least movement except by virtue of the absurd. And yet—and yet I could become furious at the thought of it, if only out of envy—this man is making and has made at every moment the movement of infinity! In infinite resignation he drains the dark waters of melancholy to the last drop; he knows the blessedness of infinity; he has known the pain of forsaking everything in the world that was most dear to him; and yet the taste of the finite is as pleasing to him as if he had never known anything higher, for he remains in the finite without betraying any sign of his uneasy and tortured training, and yet rejoices in it with so much assurance that for him there appears to be nothing more certain.

Yet the whole earthly shape which he assumes is something newly created by virtue of the absurd. In his infinite resignation he gave up everything and then regained every-



thing by virtue of the absurd. He is always making the movement of infinity, but he makes the movement with so much precision and assurance that he possesses himself of the finite without anyone, even for a moment, suspecting anything else. The most difficult feat which a dancer can attempt is said to be a leap and take up a definite attitude, so that at no particular moment does he appear to be trying to take up this position, but assumes the attitude as he leaps. Perhaps there are no dancers who can perform this feat—but the knight performs it. Most men's lives are lost among the joys and sorrows of the world: they 'sit out' and take no part in the dance. The knights of infinite resignation are dancers and have elevation. They make the upward movement and fall down again; and this pastime has much to commend itself and is not displeasing to the eye. But every time they fall down, they cannot immediately take up their positions, they falter for a moment and their faltering shows that they are strangers in the world. This is more or less apparent according to the degree of their art, but even the most masterly of them cannot conceal his faltering. It is not necessary to watch them in the air, one need only watch them at the moment when they touch and have touched the earth—then you will recognize them. To be able to fall in such a way as to appear at once standing and walking, to be able to transform the leap into life into a normal gait, to be able to express perfectly the sublime in terms of the pedestrian—only the knight can do this—and this is the single miracle.

## IV

### THE SUBJECTIVE THINKER

The Child's Toys and the Old Man's Reasons  
Are the fruits of the two seasons.  
The Questioner who sits so sly  
Shall never know how to reply. . . .  
He who Doubts from what he sees  
Will ne'er Believe, do what you Please.  
If the Sun and Moon should doubt,  
They'd immediately go out.  
To be in a Passion you Good may do,  
But no Good if a Passion is in you.

WILLIAM BLAKE

It is quite remarkable that one gets a conception of eternity from two of the most appalling contrasts in life. If I think of that unhappy bookkeeper who lost his reason from despair at having involved his firm in bankruptcy by adding 7 and 6 to make 14; if I think of him day after day, oblivious to everything else, repeating to himself: 7 and 6 are 14, then I have an image of eternity.—If I imagine a voluptuous feminine beauty in a harem, reclining on a couch in all charming grace, without concern for anything in the world, then I have a symbol for eternity.

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It is impossible to exist without passion, unless we understand the word 'exist' in the loose sense of a so-called existence. Every Greek thinker was therefore essentially a passionate thinker. I have often reflected how one might bring a man into a state of passion. I have thought in this

connection that if I could get him seated on a horse and the horse made to take fright and gallop wildly, or better still, for the sake of bringing the passion out, if I could take a man who wanted to arrive at a certain place as quickly as possible, and hence already had some passion, and could set him astride a horse that can scarcely walk—and yet this is what existence is like if one is to become consciously aware of it. Or if a driver were otherwise not especially inclined toward passion, if someone hitched a team of horses to a wagon for him, one of them a Pegasus and the other a worn-out jade, and told him to drive—I think one might succeed. And it is just this that it means to exist, if one is to become conscious of it. Eternity is the winged horse, infinitely fast, and time is a worn-out jade; the existing individual is the driver. That is to say, he is such a driver when his mode of existence is not an existence loosely so called; for then he is no driver, but a drunken peasant who lies asleep in the wagon and lets the horses take care of themselves. To be sure, he also drives and is a driver; and so there are perhaps many who—also exist.



All knowledge about reality is possibility. The only reality to which an existing individual may have a relation that is more than cognitive is his own reality, the fact that he exists; this reality constitutes his absolute interest. Abstract thought requires him to become disinterested in order to acquire knowledge; the ethical demand is that he become infinitely interested in existing.

The only reality that exists for an existing individual is his own ethical reality. To every other reality he stands in a cognitive relation; but true knowledge consists in translating the real into the possible.

The apparent trustworthiness of sense is an illusion. This was shown adequately as early as in Greek scepticism, and modern idealism has likewise demonstrated it. The trust-

worthiness claimed by a knowledge of the historical is also a deception, in so far as it assumes to be the very trustworthiness of reality; for the knower cannot know a historical reality until he has resolved it into a possibility. (On this point, more in what follows.) Abstract thought embraces the possible, either the preceding or the subsequent possibility; pure thought is a phantom.

The real subject is not the cognitive subject, since in knowing he moves in the sphere of the possible; the real subject is the ethically existing subject. An abstract thinker exists, to be sure, but this fact is rather a satire on him than otherwise. For an abstract thinker to try to prove his existence by the fact that he thinks, is a curious contradiction; for in the degree that he thinks abstractly he abstracts from his own existence. In so far his existence is revealed as a presupposition from which he seeks emancipation; but the act of abstraction nevertheless becomes a strange sort of proof for his existence, since if it succeeded entirely his existence would cease. The Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* has often been repeated. If the 'I' which is the subject of *cogito* means an individual human being, the proposition proves nothing: 'I am thinking, *ergo* I am; but if I *am* thinking what wonder that I *am*'; the assertion has already been made, and the first proposition says even more than the second. But if the 'I' in *cogito* is interpreted as meaning a particular existing human being, philosophy cries: 'How silly; here there is no question of your self or my self, but solely of the pure ego.' But this pure ego cannot very well have any other than a purely conceptual existence; what then does the *ergo* mean? There is no conclusion here, for the proposition is a tautology.

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Absolute passion cannot be understood by a third party, and this holds both for his relationship to others and for their relationship to him. In absolute passion the individual

is in the very extremity of his subjectivity, as a consequence of his having reflected himself out of every external relativity; but a third party is precisely such a relativity. Even one who is absolutely in love knows this. A lover who is absolutely in love does not know whether he is more or less in love than others, for anyone who knows this is, just on that account, not absolutely in love. Nor does he know that he is the only lover who has been truly in love; for if he knows this, he knows precisely that he himself is not absolutely in love—and yet he knows that a third party cannot understand him, because a third party will understand him only generally with respect to the object of his passion, but cannot understand him in the absoluteness of his passion.



The way of objective reflection makes the subject accidental, and thereby transforms existence into something indifferent, something vanishing. Away from the subject the objective way of reflection leads to the objective truth, and while the subject and his subjectivity become indifferent, the truth also becomes indifferent, and this indifference is precisely its objective validity; for all interest, like all decisiveness, is rooted in subjectivity. The way of objective reflection leads to abstract thought, to mathematics, to historical knowledge of different kinds; and always it leads away from the subject, whose existence or nonexistence, and from the objective point of view quite rightly, becomes infinitely indifferent. Quite rightly, since as Hamlet says, existence and nonexistence have only subjective significance. At its maximum this way will arrive at a contradiction, and in so far as the subject does not become wholly indifferent to himself, this merely constitutes a sign that his objective striving is not objective enough. At its maximum this way will lead to the contradiction that only the objective has come into being, while the subjective has gone out; that is

to say, the existing subjectivity has vanished, in that it has made an attempt to become what in the abstract sense is called subjectivity, the mere abstract form of an abstract objectivity. And yet, the objectivity which has thus come into being is, from the subjective point of view at the most, either a hypothesis or an approximation, because all eternal decisiveness is rooted in subjectivity.

However, the objective way deems itself to have a security which the subjective way does not have (and, of course, existence and existing cannot be thought in combination with objective security); it thinks to escape a danger which threatens the subjective way, and this danger is at its maximum: madness. In a merely subjective determination of the truth, madness and truth become in the last analysis indistinguishable, since they may both have inwardness.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, perhaps I may here venture to offer a little remark, one which would seem to be not wholly superfluous in an objective age. The absence of inwardness is also madness. The objective truth as such is by no means adequate to determine that whoever utters it is sane; on the contrary, it may even betray the fact that he is mad, although what he says may be entirely true, and especially objectively true. I shall here permit myself to tell a story, which without any sort of adaptation on my part comes directly from an asylum. A patient in such an institution seeks to escape, and actually succeeds in effecting his purpose by leaping out of a window, and prepares to start on the road to freedom, when the thought strikes him (shall I say sanely enough or madly enough?): 'When you come to town you will be recognized, and you will at once be brought back here again; hence you

<sup>1</sup> Even this is not really true, however, for madness never has the specific inwardness of the infinite. Its fixed idea is precisely some sort of objectivity, and the contradiction of madness consists in embracing this with passion. The critical point in such madness is thus again not the subjective, but the little finitude which has become a fixed idea, which is something that can never happen to the infinite.

need to prepare yourself fully to convince everybody by the objective truth of what you say, that all is in order as far as your sanity is concerned.' 'As he walks along and thinks about this, he sees a ball lying on the ground, picks it up, and puts it into the tail pocket of his coat. Every step he takes the ball strikes him, politely speaking, on his hinder parts, and every time it thus strikes him he says: 'Bang, the earth is round.' He comes to the city, and at once calls on one of his friends; he wants to convince him that he is not crazy, and therefore walks back and forth, saying continually: 'Bang, the earth is round!' But is not the earth round? Does the asylum still crave yet another sacrifice for this opinion, as in the time when all men believed it to be flat as a pancake? Or is a man who hopes to prove that he is sane, by uttering a generally accepted and generally respected objective truth, insane? And yet it was clear to the physician that the patient was not yet cured; though it is not to be thought that the cure would consist in getting him to accept the opinion that the earth is flat. But all men are not physicians, and what the age demands seems to have a considerable influence upon the question of what madness is. Aye, one could almost be tempted sometimes to believe that the modern age, which has modernized Christianity, has also modernized the question of Pontius Pilate, and that its urge to find something in which it can rest proclaims itself in the question: What is madness? When a *Privatdocent*, every time his scholastic gown reminds him that he ought to say something, says *de omnibus dubitandum est*, and at the same time writes away at a system which offers abundant internal evidence in every other sentence that the man has never doubted anything at all: he is not regarded as mad.

Don Quixote is the prototype for a subjective madness, in which the passion of inwardness embraces a particular finite fixed idea. But the absence of inwardness gives us on the other hand the prating madness, which is quite as comical;

and it might be a very desirable thing if an experimental psychologist would delineate it by taking a handful of such philosophers and bringing them together. In the type of madness which manifests itself in an aberrant inwardness, the tragic and the comic is that the something which is of such infinite concern to the unfortunate individual is a particular fixation which does not really concern anybody. In the type of madness which consists in the absence of inwardness, the comic is that though the something which the happy individual knows really is the truth, the truth which concerns all men, it does not in the slightest degree concern the much respected prater. This type of madness is more inhuman than the other. One shrinks from looking into the eyes of a madman of the former type lest one be compelled to plumb there the depths of his delirium; but one dares not look at a madman of the latter type at all, from fear of discovering that he has eyes of glass and hair made from carpet-rags; that he is, in short, an artificial product. If you meet someone who suffers from such a derangement of feeling, the derangement consists in his not having any, you listen to what he says in a cold and awful dread, scarcely knowing whether it is a human being who speaks, or a cunningly contrived walking stick in which a talking machine has been concealed. It is always unpleasant for a proud man to find himself unwittingly drinking a toast of brotherhood with a public hangman; but to find oneself engaged in rational and philosophical conversation with a walking stick is almost enough to make a man lose his mind.

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Let us take the problem of *what it means to die*. I know concerning this what people in general know about it; I know that I shall die if I take a dose of sulphuric acid, and also if I drown myself, or go to sleep in an atmosphere of coal gas, and so forth. I know that Napoleon always went



about with poison ready to hand; and that Juliet in Shakespeare poisoned herself. I know that the Stoics regarded suicide as a courageous deed, and that others consider it a cowardly act. I know that death may result from so ridiculous and trivial a circumstance that even the most serious-minded of men cannot help laughing at death; I know that it is possible to escape what appears to be certain death, and so forth. I know that the tragic hero dies in the fifth act of the drama, and that death here has an infinite significance in pathos; but that when a bartender dies, death does not have this significance. I know that the poet can interpret death in a diversity of moods, even to the limit of the comical; I pledge myself to produce the same diversity of effects in prose. I know furthermore what the clergy are accustomed to say on this subject, and I am familiar with the general run of themes treated at funerals. If nothing else stands in the way of my passing over to world history, I am ready; I need only purchase black cloth for a ministerial gown, and I shall engage to preach funeral sermons as well as any ordinary clergyman. I freely admit that those who wear a velvet inset in their gowns do it more elegantly; but this distinction is not essential any more than the difference between five dollars and ten dollars for the hearse.

Nevertheless, in spite of this almost extraordinary knowledge or facility in knowledge, I can by no means regard death as something I have understood. Before I pass over to universal history—of which I must always say: ‘God knows whether it is any concern of yours’—it seems to me that I had better think about this, lest existence mock me, because I had become so learned and high-falutin that I had forgotten to understand what will sometime happen to me as to every human being—sometime, nay, what am I saying: suppose death were so treacherous as to come to-morrow! Merely this one uncertainty, when it is to be understood and held fast by an existing individual, and hence enter into every.

thought, precisely because it is an uncertainty entering into my beginning upon universal history even, so that I make it clear to myself whether if death comes to-morrow, I am beginning upon something that is worth beginning—merely this one uncertainty generates inconceivable difficulties, difficulties that not even the speaker who treats of death is always aware of, in that he thinks that he apprehends the uncertainty of death, while nevertheless forgetting to think it into what he says about it, so that he speaks movingly and with emotion about the uncertainty of death, and yet ends by encouraging his hearers to make a resolution for the whole of life. This is essentially to forget the uncertainty of death, since otherwise the enthusiastic resolve for the whole of life must be made commensurable with the uncertainty of death. To think about it once for all, or once a year at matins on New Year's morning, is, of course, nonsense, and is the same as not thinking about it at all. If someone who thinks the thought in this manner also assumes to explain universal history, then it may well be that what he says about universal history is glorious, but what he says about death is stupid. If death is always uncertain, if I am a mortal creature, then it is impossible to understand this uncertainty in terms of a mere generality unless indeed I, too, happen to be merely a human being in general. But this is surely not the case, and it is only the absent-minded, like Soldin the bookseller for example, who are merely human beings in general. And if initially my human nature is merely an abstract something, it is at any rate the task which life sets me to become subjective; and in the same degree that I become subjective, the uncertainty of death comes more and more to interpenetrate my subjectivity dialectically. It thus becomes more and more important for me to think it in connection with every factor and phase of life; for since the uncertainty is there in every moment, it can be overcome only by overcoming it in every moment.

If, on the other hand, the uncertainty of death is merely something in general, then my own death is itself only something in general. Perhaps this is also the case for systematic philosophers, for absentminded people. For the late Herr Soldin, his own death is supposed to have been such a thing in general: 'when he was about to get up in the morning he was not aware that he was dead.' But the fact of my own death is not for me by any means such a something in general, although for others, the fact of my death may indeed be something of that sort. Nor am I for myself such a something in general, although perhaps for others I may be a mere generality. But if the task of life is to become subjective, then every subject will *for himself* become the very opposite of such a something in general. And it would seem to be a somewhat embarrassing thing to be so significant for universal history, and then at home, in company with oneself, to be merely a something in general. It is already embarrassing enough for a man who is an extraordinary, important figure in the public assembly to come home to his wife, and then to be for her only such a something in general.

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If Hegel had written his whole *Logic* and in the Preface disclosed the fact that it was merely a thought experiment (in which, however, at many points he had shirked something), he would have been the greatest thinker that has ever lived. Now this is comic.

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When a man has gone astray to the point of perdition and he is about to sink, his last speech, the sign is, 'and yet something better in me is being lost.' It is like the bubbles rising to the surface from a drowning man; that is the sign—then he sinks. Just as self-isolation can be a man's downfall,

because he will not reveal what is hidden, in the same way to pronounce those words spells destruction. For that declaration expresses the fact that he has become so objective to himself that he can talk of his own destruction as of something settled, which can now be of psychological interest to a third person. The hope that there was something better in him, which should have been used in silence to work for his salvation, that hope is made public and used as an ingredient in the funeral oration he pronounces upon himself.

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*When the question of truth is raised in an objective manner, reflection is directed objectively to the truth, as an object to which the knower is related. Reflection is not focused upon the relationship, however, but upon the question of whether it is the truth to which the knower is related. If only the object to which he is related is the truth, the subject is accounted to be in the truth. When the question of the truth is raised subjectively, reflection is directed subjectively to the nature of the individual's relationship; if only the mode of this relationship is in the truth, the individual is in the truth even if he should happen to be thus related to what is not true. Let us take as an example the knowledge of God. Objectively, reflection is directed to the problem of whether this object is the true God; subjectively, reflection is directed to the question whether the individual is related to a something in such a manner that his relationship is in truth a God-relationship. On which side is the truth now to be found? Ah, may we not here resort to a mediation, and say: It is on neither side, but in the mediation of both? Excellently well said, provided we might have it explained how an existing individual manages to be in a state of mediation. For to be in a state of mediation is to be finished, while to exist is to become. Nor can an existing individual be in two places at the same time—he cannot be an identity of subject and object. When he is nearest to being in two places*

at the same time he is in passion; but passion is momentary, and passion is also the highest expression of subjectivity.

The existing individual who chooses to pursue the objective way enters upon the entire proximation-process by which it is proposed to bring God to light objectively. But this is in all eternity impossible, because God is a subject, and therefore exists only for subjectivity in inwardness. The existing individual who chooses the subjective way apprehends instantly the entire dialectical difficulty involved in having to use some time, perhaps a long time, in finding God objectively; and he feels this dialectical difficulty in all its painfulness, because every moment is wasted in which he does not have God.<sup>1</sup> That very instant he has God, not by virtue of any objective deliberation, but by virtue of the infinite passion of inwardness. The objective inquirer, on the other hand, is not embarrassed by such dialectical difficulties as are involved in devoting an entire period of investigation to finding God—since it is possible that the inquirer may die to-morrow; and if he lives he can scarcely regard God as something to be taken along if convenient, since God is precisely that which one takes *à tout prix*, which in the understanding of passion constitutes the true inward relationship to God.

*An objective uncertainty held fast in the approximation-process of the most passionate inwardness is the truth, the highest truth attainable for an existing individual. At the point where the way swings off (and where this is cannot be specified objectively, since it is a matter of subjectivity), there objec-*

<sup>1</sup> In this manner God certainly becomes a postulate, but not in the otiose manner in which this word is commonly understood. It becomes clear rather that the only way in which an existing individual comes into relation with God, is when the dialectical contradiction brings his passion to the point of despair, and helps him to embrace God with the 'category of despair' (faith). Then the postulate is so far from being arbitrary that it is precisely a life-necessity. It is then not so much that God is a postulate, as that the existing individual's postulation of God is a necessity.

tive knowledge is placed in abeyance. Thus the subject merely has, objectively, the uncertainty; but it is this which precisely increases the tension of that infinite passion which constitutes his inwardness. The truth is precisely the venture which chooses an objective uncertainty with the passion of the infinite. I contemplate the order of nature in the hope of finding God, and I see omnipotence and wisdom; but I also see much else that disturbs my mind and excites anxiety. The sum of all this is an objective uncertainty. But it is for this very reason that the inwardness becomes as intense as it is, for it embraces this objective uncertainty with the entire passion of the infinite. In the case of a mathematical proposition the objectivity is given, but for this reason the truth of such a proposition is also an indifferent truth.

But the above definition of truth is an equivalent expression for faith. Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God objectively, I do not believe, but precisely because I cannot do this I must believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out upon the deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, still preserving my faith.

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What a curious, yet profound turn of phrase which makes it possible to say: in this case there is no question of a *choice*—I choose this and this. To continue: Christianity says to a man: you shall choose the one essential thing but in such a way that there is no question of a choice—if you drivel on any longer, then you do not in fact choose the one essential thing; like the Kingdom of God it must be chosen *first*.

So there is consequently something in regard to which there may not be, and in thought cannot be a choice, and

nevertheless it is a choice. Consequently, the very fact that in this case there is no *choice* expresses the tremendous passion or intensity with which it must be *chosen*. Could there be a clearer expression of the fact that the liberty of choice is only a qualified form of freedom? . . . However astonishing it may seem, one is therefore obliged to say that only 'fear and trembling', only constraint, can help a man to freedom. Because 'fear and trembling' and compulsion can master him in such a way that there is no longer any question of choice—and then one chooses the right thing. At the hour of death most people choose the right thing.

Now how are the sciences to help? Simply not at all, in no way whatsoever. They reduce everything to calm and objective observation—with the result that freedom is an inexplicable something. Scientifically Spinoza is the only one who is consistent.

The problem is the same as with belief and speculation; it is like sawing: in one case it means making oneself objectively light, in the other case making oneself subjectively heavy—and people want to saw in and out at the same time. Freedom really only *exists* because the same instant it (freedom of choice) exists it rushes with infinite speed to bind itself unconditionally by choosing resignation, the choice of which it is true that in it there is no question of a choice.

The inconceivable marvel of the omnipotence of love is that God can really grant so much to man, that almost like a lover<sup>1</sup> He can say of Himself: 'will you have me or not', and so wait one second for the answer.

But, alas, man is not so purely spirit. It seems to him that since the choice is left to him he can take time and *first of all* think the matter over *seriously*. What a miserable anticlimax. 'Seriousness' simply means to choose God at once and 'first'. In that way man is left juggling with a phantom:

<sup>1</sup> S. K. is playing on the two words '*at fri*' and '*at frie*' to woo and to make free.

freedom of choice—with the question whether he does or does not possess it, etc. And it even becomes scientific. He does not notice that he has thus suffered the loss of his freedom. For a time perhaps he delights in the thoughts of freedom until it changes again, and he becomes doubtful whether he is free or not. Then he loses his freedom of choice. He confuses everything by his faulty tactics (militarily speaking). By directing his mind towards 'freedom of choice' instead of choosing he loses both freedom and freedom of choice. Nor can he ever recover it by the use of thought alone. If he is to recover his freedom, it can only be through an intensified 'fear and trembling' brought forth by the thought of having lost it.

The most tremendous thing which has been granted to man is: the choice, freedom. And if you desire to save it and preserve it there is only one way: in the very same second unconditionally and in complete resignation to give it back to God, and yourself with it. If the sight of what is granted to you tempts you, and if you give way to the temptation and look with egoistic desire upon the freedom of choice, then you lose your freedom. And your punishment is: to go on in a kind of confusion priding yourself on having—freedom of choice, but woe upon you, that is your judgement: You have freedom of choice, you say, and still you have not chosen God. Then you will grow ill, freedom of choice will become your *idée fixe*, till at last you will be like the rich man who imagines that he is poor, and will die of want: you sigh that you have lost your freedom of choice—and your fault is only that you do not grieve deeply enough or you would find it again.

#### I. BECOMING

How does that which comes into being change? Or, what<sup>u</sup> is the nature of the change involved in becoming (γενεσις)?



All other change (ἀλλοίωσις) presupposes the existence of that which changes, even when the change consists in ceasing to be. Not so, however, in the case of becoming. For if the subject of becoming does not in itself remain unchanged in the process of becoming, it is not *this* which comes into being, but some other thing, and the question is guilty of a μετάβασις εἰς ἄλλογένοϛ, in that the inquirer in the given case either sees some other change co-present with the change of becoming, which confuses his question; or he mistakes the nature of what is undergoing becoming, and thus cannot put the question. If a plan, in coming into being, is changed in itself, it is not this plan that comes into being; but if it comes into being unchanged, what is the nature of the change by which it comes into being? This change is clearly not a change in essence, but in being; it is a transition from not being to being. But this non-being which the subject of becoming leaves behind must itself have some sort of being; for otherwise we could not say, as we said above, that the 'subject of becoming remains unchanged in the process of becoming'; unless we propose to say that it has no being of any kind, whereby the change we call becoming would again for another reason be absolutely different from every other kind of change, in that it would not be a change at all; for every change presupposes a something. But a being of this kind, which is nevertheless a non-being, is what we know as possibility; and a being which is being is actual being, or actuality; so that the change involved in becoming is the transition from possibility to actuality.

Can the necessary come into existence? Becoming is a change; but the necessary cannot undergo any change, since it is always related to itself, and related to itself in the same manner. All coming into being is a kind of *suffering*, and the necessary cannot suffer; it cannot suffer the suffering of the actual, which is that the possible (not only the excluded possibility, but also the accepted possibility) reveals

itself as nothing the moment it becomes actual; for the possible is annihilated in the actual. Everything that comes into being proves precisely by coming into being that it is not necessary; for the necessary is the only thing that cannot come into being, because the necessary is.

Is not necessity, then, a synthesis of possibility and actuality?—What could this mean? The possible and the actual do not differ in essence but in being; how could there from this difference be formed a synthesis constituting the necessary, which is not a determination of being but of essence, since it is of the essence of the necessary to be. If the possible and the actual were capable of uniting to become the necessary, they would in becoming the necessary become an absolutely different essence, which is not a kind of change; and in becoming necessity or the necessary they would become that which alone of all things excludes becoming, which is as impossible as it is self-contradictory. (Compare the Aristotelian principle: 'it is possible,' 'it is possible that not,' 'it is not possible.'—The theory of true and false propositions, e.g., Epicurus, tends only to confuse the issue here, since it is essence and not being which is reflected upon, so that in this way no help is afforded with respect to a determination of future being.)

Necessity stands entirely by itself. Nothing ever comes into being with necessity; what is necessary never comes into being; nothing becomes necessary by coming into being. Nothing whatever exists because it is necessary; but the necessary is because it is necessary, or because the necessary is. The actual is no more necessary than the possible, for the necessary is absolutely different from both. (Compare Aristotle's doctrine of the two kinds of possibility in relation to the necessary. The mistake lies in his beginning with the principle that everything which is necessary is possible. In order to avoid having to assert contradictory and even self-contradictory predicates about the necessity, he helps him-

self out by creating two species of possibility, instead of discovering that his first principle is incorrect, since possibility cannot be predicated of the necessary.)

The change involved in becoming is an actual change; the transition takes place with freedom. Becoming is never necessary. It was not necessary before it came into being, for then it could not come into being; nor after it came into being, for then it has not come into being. All becoming takes place with freedom, not by necessity. Nothing that comes into being does so by virtue of a logical ground, but only through the operation of a cause. The illusion provoked by the intervening causes is that the becoming is made to seem necessary; their truth is, that as they have themselves come into being, they ultimately refer back to a free cause. Even the possibility of deducing consequences from a law of nature does not indicate that any becoming is necessary, which becomes clear as soon as we reflect definitely upon becoming as such. The same is the case with expressions of freedom, provided we refuse to permit ourselves to be deceived by the expressions, but reflect upon the becoming.

## 2. THE HISTORICAL

Everything that has come into being is *eo ipso* historical. For even if it accepts no further historical predicate, it nevertheless accepts the one decisive historical predicate: it has come into being. That whose becoming is a simultaneous becoming (*Nebeneinander*, Space) has no other history than this. But even when viewed in this light (*en masse*), and abstracting from what an ingenious speculation calls the history of nature in a special sense, nature has a history.

But the historical is the past (for the present pressing upon the confines of the future has not yet become historical). How then can it be said that nature, though immediately present, is historical, except in the sense of the said ingenious

speculation? The difficulty comes from the fact that nature is too abstract to have a dialectic with respect to time in the stricter sense. This is nature's imperfection, that it has no history in any other sense; but it is a perfection in nature that it nevertheless has this suggestion of a history, namely that it has come into being. (This constitutes its past, the fact it exists is its present.) On the other hand, it is the perfection of the eternal to have no history, the eternal being the only existence that has absolutely no history.

However, becoming may present a reduplication, i.e., the possibility of a second becoming within the first becoming. Here we have the historical in the stricter sense, subject to a dialectic with respect to time. The becoming which in this sphere is identical with the becoming of nature is a possibility, a possibility which for nature is its whole reality. But this historical becoming in the stricter sense is a becoming within a becoming, which should constantly be kept in mind. The more specifically historical becoming comes into being by the operation of a relatively free cause, which in turn points ultimately to an absolutely free cause.

### 3. THE APPREHENSION OF THE PAST

The historical cannot be given immediately to the senses, since the elusiveness of becoming is involved in it. The immediate impression of a natural phenomenon or of an event is not the impression of the historical, for the *becoming* involved cannot be sensed immediately, but only the presence of some content. But the presence of the historical includes the fact of its becoming, or else it is not the presence of the historical as such.

Immediate sensation and immediate cognition cannot deceive. This is by itself enough to show that the historical cannot be the object of either, because the historical has the elusiveness which is implicit in all becoming. As compared

with the immediate, becoming has an elusiveness by which the most dependable fact is rendered doubtful. Thus when the observer sees a star, the star becomes involved in doubt the moment he seeks to become aware of its having come into being. It is as if reflection took the star away from the senses. So much then is clear, that the organ for the historical must have a structure analogous with the historical itself; it must comprise a corresponding somewhat by which it may repeatedly negate in its certainty the uncertainty that corresponds to the uncertainty of becoming. The latter uncertainty is two-fold: the nothingness of the antecedent non-being is one side of it, while the annihilation of the possible is another, the latter being at the same time the annihilation of every other possibility. Now belief is a function that has the required character; for in the certainty of belief there is always present a negated uncertainty, in every way corresponding to the uncertainty of becoming. Faith believes what it does not see; it does not believe that the star is there, for that it sees, but it believes that the star has come into being. The same holds true of an event. The 'what' of a happening may be known immediately, but by no means can it be known immediately that it has happened. . . .

It is not accurate to say that the conclusion of belief is an inference from effect to cause; I cannot sense or know immediately that what I sense or know immediately is an effect, since for the immediate apprehension it merely is. I believe that it is an effect, for in order to bring it under this category I must already have made it doubtful with the uncertainty implicit in becoming. When faith resolves to do this, doubt has been overcome; in that very instant the indifference of doubt has been dispelled and its equilibrium overthrown, not by knowledge but by will. Thus it will be seen that faith is the most disputable of things while in process of approximation; for the uncertainty of doubt, strong and invincible in making things ambiguous, *dis-putare*, is brought into sub-

jection within it. But it is the least disputable when once constituted, by virtue of its new quality. Belief is the opposite of doubt. Belief and doubt are not two forms of knowledge, determinable in continuity with one another, for neither of them is a cognitive act; they are opposite passions. Belief is a sense for becoming, and doubt is a protest against every conclusion that transcends immediate sensation and immediate cognition. The sceptic does not, for example, deny his own existence; but he draws no conclusion from fear of being deceived. In so far as he has recourse to dialectics in order to make the opposite of any given conclusion seem equally probable, it is not on the foundation of these dialectical arguments that he sets up his scepticism. They are but outworks, human accommodations. He has no result, therefore, not even a negative result; for this would be to recognize the validity of knowledge. By an act of will he resolves to keep himself under restraint from every conclusion.



The paradox is the source of the thinker's passion, and the thinker without a paradox is like a lover without feeling: a paltry mediocrity. But the highest pitch of every passion is always to will its own downfall; and so it is also the supreme passion of the Reason to seek a collision, though this collision must in one way or another prove its undoing. The supreme paradox of all thought is the attempt to discover something that thought cannot think. This passion is at bottom present in all thinking, even in the thinking of the individual, in so far as in thinking he participates in something transcending himself. . . .

The paradoxical passion of the Reason is aroused and seeks a collision; without rightly understanding itself, it is bent upon its own downfall. This is like what happens in connection with the paradox of love. Man lives undisturbed

a self-centred life, until there awakens within him the paradox of self-love, in the form of love for another, the object of his longing. (Self-love is the underlying principle, or the principle that is made to lie under, in all love; whence if we conceive a religion of love, this religion need make but one assumption, as epigrammatic as true, and take its realization for granted: namely the condition that man loves himself, in order to command him to love his neighbour as himself.) The lover is so completely transformed by the paradox of love that he scarcely recognizes himself; so say the poets, who are the spokesmen of love, and so say also the lovers themselves, since they permit the poets merely to take the words from their lips, but not the passion from their hearts. In like manner the paradoxical passion of the Reason, while as yet a mere presentiment, retroactively affects man and his self-knowledge, so that he who thought to know himself is no longer certain whether he is a more strangely composite animal than Typhon, or if perchance his nature contains a gentler and diviner part.

But what is this unknown something with which the Reason collides when inspired by its paradoxical passion, with the result of unsettling even man's knowledge of himself? It is the Unknown. It is not a human being, in so far as we know what man is; nor is it any other known thing. So let us call this unknown something: God. It is nothing more than a name we assign to it. The idea of demonstrating that this unknown something (God) exists, could scarcely suggest itself to the Reason. For if God does not exist, it would of course be impossible to prove it; and if He does exist, it would be folly to attempt it. For at the very outset, in beginning my proof, I will have presupposed it, not as doubtful but as certain (a presupposition is never doubtful, for the very reason that it is a presupposition), since otherwise I would not begin, readily understanding that the whole would be impossible if He did not exist.

But if when I speak of proving God's existence I mean that I propose to prove that the Unknown, which exists, is God, then I express myself unfortunately. For in that case I do not prove anything, least of all an existence, but merely develop the content of a conception. Generally speaking, it is a difficult matter to prove that anything exists; and what is still worse for the intrepid souls who undertake the venture, the difficulty is such, that fame scarcely awaits those who concern themselves with it. The entire demonstration always turns into something very different from what it assumes to be, and becomes an additional development of the consequences that flow from my having assumed that the object in question exists. Thus I always reason from existence, not towards existence, whether I move in the sphere of palpable sensible fact or in the realm of thought. I do not, for example, prove that a stone exists, but that some existing thing is a stone. The procedure in a court does not prove that a criminal exists, but that the accused, whose existence is given, is a criminal. Whether we call existence an *accessorium* or the eternal *prius*, it is never subject to demonstration. Let us take ample time for consideration. We have no such reason for haste as have those who from concern for themselves or for God or for some other thing must make haste to get its existence demonstrated. Under such circumstances there may, indeed, be need for haste, especially if the prover sincerely seeks to appreciate the danger that he himself or the thing in question may be non-existent unless the proof is finished; and does not surreptitiously entertain the thought that it exists whether he succeeds in proving it or not.

If it were proposed to prove Napoleon's existence from Napoleon's deeds, would it not be a most curious proceeding? His existence does, indeed, explain his deeds, but the deeds do not prove his existence, unless I have already understood the word 'his' so as thereby to have assumed his existence. But Napoleon is only an individual, and in so far



as there exists no absolute relationship between him and his deeds, some other person might have performed the same deeds. Perhaps this is the reason why I cannot pass from the deeds to existence. If I call these deeds the deeds of Napoleon the proof becomes superfluous, since I have already named him; if I ignore this, I can never prove from the deeds that they are Napoleon's, but only in a purely ideal manner that such deeds are the deeds of a great general, and so forth. But between God and His works there exists an absolute relationship; God is not a name but a concept. Is this perhaps the reason that His *essentia involvit existentiam*? The works of God are such that only God can perform them. Just so, but where then are the works of God? The works from which I would deduce His existence are not immediately given. The wisdom of God in nature, His goodness, His wisdom in the governance of the world—are all these manifest, perhaps, upon the very face of things? Are we not here confronted with the most terrible temptation to doubt, and is it not impossible finally to dispose of all these doubts? But from such an order of things I will surely not attempt to prove God's existence; and even if I began I would never finish, and would in addition have to live constantly in suspense, lest something so terrible should suddenly happen that my bit of proof would be demolished. From what works then do I propose to derive the proof? From the works as apprehended through an ideal interpretation, i.e., such as they do not immediately reveal themselves. But in that case it is not from the works that I prove God's existence. I merely develop the ideality I have presupposed, and because of my confidence in this I make so bold as to defy all objections, even those that have not yet been made. In beginning my proof I presuppose the ideal interpretation, and also that I will be successful in carrying it through; but what else is this but to presuppose that God exists, so that I really begin by virtue of confidence in Him?

And how does God's existence emerge from the proof? Does it follow straightway, without any breach of continuity? Or have we not here an analogy to the behaviour of these toys, the little Cartesian dolls? As soon as I let go of the doll it stands on its head. I must therefore let it go. So also with the proof for God's existence. As long as I keep hold on the proof, i.e., continue to demonstrate, the existence does not come out, if for no other reason than that I am engaged in proving it; but when I let the proof go, the existence is there. But this act of letting go is surely also something; it is, indeed, a contribution of mine. Must not this also be taken into the account, this little moment, brief as it may be—it need not be long, for it is a leap. However brief this moment, if only an instantaneous now, this 'now' must be included in the reckoning. . . .

Whoever, therefore, attempts to demonstrate the existence of God (except in the case of clarifying the concept, and without the *reservatio finalis* noted above, that the existence emerges from the demonstration by a leap) proves in lieu thereof something else, something which at times, perhaps, does not need a proof, and in any case needs none better; for the fool says in his heart that there is no God, but whoever says in his heart or to men: Wait just a little and I will prove it—what a rare man of wisdom is he! If in the moment of beginning his proof it is not absolutely undetermined whether God exists or not, he does not prove it; and if it is thus undetermined in the beginning he will never come to begin, partly from fear of failure since God perhaps does not exist, and partly because he has nothing with which to begin.

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How does the learner come to realize an understanding with this paradox? We do not ask that he understand the paradox, but only that this is the paradox. It comes to pass

when the Reason and the paradox encounter one another happily in the moment; when the Reason sets itself aside and the paradox bestows itself. The third entity in which this union is realized (for it is not realized in the Reason, since it is set aside; nor in the paradox, which bestows itself—hence it is realized in something) is that happy passion to which we will now assign a name, though it is not the name that so much matters. We shall call this passion: faith. This then must be the condition of which we have spoken, which the paradox contributes. Let us not forget that if the paradox does not grant this condition, the learner must be in possession of it. But if the learner is in possession of the condition, he is *eo ipso* himself the Truth, and the moment is merely the moment of occasion.

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If it were possible to have a physical certainty that God would use one as an instrument (like a king his minister)—how could it be possible not to submit willingly to every sacrifice. But it is not possible to have a real certainty, or even a purely immediate certainty of one's relation to God. For God is spirit. One can only have a spiritual relationship to a spirit, and a spiritual relationship is *eo ipso* dialectical.

I cannot acquire an immediate certainty as to whether I have faith—for to believe means precisely that dialectical hovering which, although in fear and trembling, never despairs; faith is an infinite self-made care as to whether one has faith—and that self-made care is faith.



## SIN AND DREAD

. . . Wilt thou forgive that sinne by which I have wonne  
Others to sinne, and made my sinne their doore?  
Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shunne  
A yeare or two, but wallowed in a score?  
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,  
For I have more.

I have a sinne of feare, that when I have spunne  
My last thred, I shall perish on the shore;  
Swear by thy selfe, that at my death thy sonne  
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;  
And having done that, thou hast done.  
I have no more.

JOHN DONNE

Sin is: before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or  
before God in despair to will to be oneself.



No despair is entirely without defiance: in fact, defiance is implied in the very expression, 'not to will to be.' On the other hand even the extremest defiance of despair is after all never without some weakness. The difference is, therefore, only relative. The one form is, so to speak, the despair of womanliness, the other, manliness.



It is linguistically correct to say, 'in despair *over* the earthly' (the occasion), and '*about* the eternal', but '*over* one-

self', because this is again another expression for the occasion of despair, which in its concept is always *about* the eternal, whereas that *over* which one despairs may be of the most various sorts. One despairs *over* that which fixes one in despair, over one's misfortune, for example, over the earthly, over the loss of one's fortune, but *about* that which, rightly understood, releases one from despair, therefore about the eternal, about one's salvation, about one's own power, etc. In relation to the self one employs both words: to despair *over* and *about* oneself, because the self is doubly dialectic. And herein consists the obscurity, especially in all lower forms of despair, and in almost all despairers, that with such passionate clearness a man sees and knows *over* what he is in despair, but *about* what it is escapes his notice.



The difference between the despair of weakness and the despair *over* weakness consists of the fact that the foregoing form has the consciousness of weakness as its final consciousness, whereas in this case consciousness does not come to a stop here but potentiates itself to a new consciousness, a consciousness of its weakness. The despairer understands that it is weakness to take the earthly so much to heart, that it is weakness to despair. But then, instead of veering sharply away from despair to faith, humbling himself before God for his weakness, he is more deeply absorbed in despair and despairs over his weakness.

Just as a father disinherits a son, so the self is not willing to recognize itself after it has been so weak. In its despair it cannot forget this weakness, it hates itself in a way, it will not humble itself in faith under its weakness in order to gain itself again; no, in its despair it will not hear of itself, so to speak, will not know anything about itself. But there can be no question of being helped by forgetfulness, no question of slipping by the aid of forgetfulness under the determinant.

of selflessness, and so being a man and a Christian like other men and Christians; no, for this the self is too much a self. As it often was the case with the father who disinherited his son that the outward fact was of little avail to him, he did not by this get free of his son, at least his thought did not; as is often the case with the lover's curse upon the hated one (i.e., the loved one): that it does not help much, it almost imprisons him the more—so it is in the case of the despairing self with relation to itself.

### FORMS OF DESPAIR

#### 1. *The Despair of Immediacy*

Properly speaking, immediacy has no self, it does not recognize itself, so neither can it recognize itself again; it terminates, therefore, preferably in the romantic. When immediacy despairs it possesses not even enough self to wish or to dream that it had become what it did not become. The immediate man helps himself in a different way: he wishes to be another. Of this one may easily convince oneself by observing immediate men. At the moment of despair no wish is so natural to them as the wish that they had become or might become another. Commonly such a despairer is infinitely comic. Think of a self (and next to God there is nothing so eternal as a self), and then that this self gets a notion of asking whether it might not let itself become or be made into another . . . than itself. And yet such a despairer, whose only wish is this most crazy of all transformations, loves to think that this change might be accomplished as easily as changing a coat. For the immediate man does not recognize his self, he recognizes himself only by his dress, he recognizes (and here again appears the infinitely comic trait), he recognizes that he has a self only by externals. There is no more ludicrous confusion, for a self is just infinitely different from externals.

## 2. *The Despair of Possibility*

In possibility everything is possible. Hence in possibility one can go astray in all possible ways, but essentially in two. One form is the wishful yearning form, the other is the melancholy fantastic—on the one hand hope; on the other, fear or anguished dread. Fairy tales and legends so often relate that a knight suddenly perceives a rare bird, which he continues to run after, since at the beginning it seemed as if it were so very near—but then it flies off again, until at last night falls, and he has become separated from his companions, being unable to find his way in the wilderness where he now is. So it is with the possibility of the wish. Instead of summoning back possibility into necessity, the man pursues the possibility—and at last he cannot find his way back to himself.—In the melancholy form the opposite result is reached in the same way. The individual pursues with melancholy love a possibility of agonizing dread, which at last leads him away from himself, so that he perishes in the dread, or perishes in that in which he was in dread of perishing.

## 3. *The Despair of Necessity*

The determinist or the fatalist is in despair, and in despair he has lost his self, because for him everything is necessary.

The fatalist is in despair—he has lost God, and therefore himself as well; for if he has no God, neither has he a self. But the fatalist has no God—or, what is the same thing, his God is necessity. The worship of the fatalist is, therefore, at its maximum an exclamation, and essentially it is dumbness, dumb submission, he is unable to pray. So to pray is to breathe, and possibility is for the self what oxygen is for breathing. But for possibility alone or for necessity alone to supply the conditions for the breathing of prayer is no more.

possible than it is for a man to breathe oxygen alone or nitrogen alone.

For in order to pray there must be a God, there must be a self plus possibility, or a self and possibility in the pregnant sense; for God is that all things are possible, and that all things are possible is God; and only the man whose being has been so shaken that he became spirit by understanding that all things are possible, only he has had dealings with God. The fact that God's will is the possible makes it possible for me to pray: if God's will is only the necessary, man is essentially as speechless as the brutes.

#### 4. *The Despair of Resignation*

Much which is embellished by the name of resignation is a kind of despair, that of willing despairingly to be one's abstract self, of willing despairingly to be satisfied with the eternal and thereby to be able to defy or ignore suffering in the earthly and temporal sphere. The dialectic of resignation is commonly this: to will to be one's eternal self, and then with respect to something positive wherein the self suffers, not to will to be oneself, contenting oneself with the thought that, after all, this will disappear in eternity, thinking itself therefore justified in not accepting it in time, so that, although suffering under it, the self will not make to it the concession that it properly belongs to the self; that is, it will not humble itself under it in faith. Resignation regarded as despair is essentially different from the form, 'in despair at not willing to be oneself', for it wills desperately to be itself—with exception, however, of one particular, with respect to which it wills despairingly not to be itself.

#### 5. *Defiant Despair*

In order to will in despair to be oneself there must be con-



sciousness of the infinite self. This infinite self, however, is really only the abstractest form, the abstractest possibility of the self, and it is this self the man despairingly wills to be, detaching the self from every relation to the Power which posited it, or detaching it from the conception that there is such a Power in existence. By the aid of this infinite form the self despairingly wills to dispose of itself or to create itself, to make itself the self it wills to be, distinguishing in the concrete self what it will and what it will not accept. The man's concrete self, or his concretion, has, in fact, necessity and limitations; it is this perfectly definite thing, with these faculties, dispositions, etc. But by the aid of the infinite form, the negative self, he wills first to undertake to re-fashion the whole thing, in order to get out of it in this way a self as he wants to have, produced by the aid of the infinite form of the negative self—and it is thus he wills to be himself. That is to say, he is not willing to begin with the beginning but 'in the beginning'. He is not willing to attire himself in himself, nor to see his task in the self given him; by the aid of being the infinite form he wills to construct it himself.

### 6. *Demoniac Despair*

The demoniac despair is the most potentiated form of the despair which despairingly wills to be itself. This despair does not will to be itself with Stoic doting upon itself, nor with self-deification, willing in this way, doubtless mendaciously, yet in a certain sense in terms of its perfection; no, with hatred for existence it wills to be itself, to be itself in terms of its misery; it does not even in defiance or defiantly will to be itself, but to be itself in spite; it does not even will in defiance to tear itself free from the Power which posited it, it wills to obtrude upon this Power in spite, to hold on to it out of malice. And that is natural, a malignant

objection must above all take care to hold on to that against which it is an objection. Revolting against the whole of existence, it thinks it has hold of a proof against it, against its goodness. This proof the despairer thinks he himself is, and that is what he wills to be, therefore he wills to be himself, himself with his torment, in order with this torment to protest against the whole of existence. Whereas the weak despairer will not hear about what comfort eternity has for him, so neither will such a despairer hear about it, but for a different reason, namely, because this comfort would be the destruction of him as an objection against the whole of existence. It is (to describe it figuratively) as if an author were to make a slip of the pen, and that this clerical error became conscious of being such—perhaps it was no error but in a far higher sense was an essential constituent in the whole exposition—it is then as if this clerical error would revolt against the author, out of hatred for him were to forbid him to correct it, and were to say, 'No, I will not be erased, I will stand as a witness against thee, that thou art a very poor writer.'

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Every human existence which is not conscious of itself as spirit, or conscious of itself before God as spirit, every human existence which is not thus grounded transparently in God but obscurely reposes or terminates in some abstract universality (state, nation, etc.), or in obscurity about itself takes its faculties merely as active powers, without in a deeper sense being conscious whence it has them, which regards itself as an inexplicable something which is to be understood from without—every such existence, whatever it accomplishes, though it be the most amazing exploit, whatever it explains, though it were the whole of existence, however intensely it enjoys life aesthetically—every such existence is, after all, despair. It was this the old theologians meant when

they talked about the virtues of the pagans being splendid vices. They meant that the most inward experience of the pagan was despair, that the pagan was not conscious of himself before God as spirit. Hence it came about (to cite here an example which has at the same time a deeper relation to the whole study) that the pagans judged self-slaughter so lightly, yea, even praised it, notwithstanding that for the spirit it is the most decisive sin, that to break out of existence in this way is rebellion against God. The pagan lacked the spirit's definition of the self, therefore he expressed such a judgement of *self*-slaughter—and this the same pagan did who condemned with moral severity theft, unchastity, etc. He lacked the point of view for regarding self-slaughter, he lacked the God relationship and the self. From a purely pagan point of view self-slaughter is a thing indifferent, a thing every man may do if he likes, because it concerns nobody else. If from a pagan point of view one were to warn against self-slaughter, it must be by a long detour, by showing that it was breach of duty toward one's fellow men. The point in self-slaughter, that it is a crime against God, entirely escapes the pagan. One cannot say, therefore, that the self-slaughter was despair, which would be a thoughtless *hysteron proteron*; one must say that the fact that the pagan judged self-slaughter as he did was despair.



In Stoicism we see the combination of pride and cowardice. One remains on the heights of pride as long as possible by always having cowardice as an escape. Pride is therefore like the extravagance of a bankrupt all during the time in which he knows that he will declare himself a bankrupt. It is not that pride changes into cowardice on the appearance of suicide; no, pride was all the time bolstered up with the thought of suicide; pride was cowardice.

## THE SOCRATIC DEFINITION OF SIN

Sin is ignorance. This is the well-known Socratic definition of sin, which, like everything Socratic, is an opinion always worthy of attention.

The difficulty with the Socratic definition is that it leaves undetermined how ignorance itself is to be more precisely understood, the question of its origin, etc. That is to say, even if sin be ignorance (or what Christianity would perhaps prefer to call stupidity), which in one sense cannot be denied, we have to ask, is this an original ignorance, is it always the case that one has not known and hitherto could not know anything about the truth, or is it a superinduced, a subsequent ignorance? If it is what the last question implies, then sin must properly have its ground in something else, it must have its ground in the activity with which a man has laboured to obscure his intelligence. But also when this is assumed, the stiff-necked and tough-lived difficulty returns, prompting the question whether at the instant a man began to obscure his intelligence he was distinctly conscious of what he was doing. If he was not distinctly conscious of this, then his intelligence was already somewhat obscured before he began, and the question merely returns again. If it is assumed on the contrary that when he began to obscure his intelligence he was distinctly conscious of it, then sin (even though it be unconsciousness, seeing that this was an induced state) would not lie in the intelligence but in the will, and the question which must be raised is about the relation of the intelligence and the will to one another. With such questions as these (and one might continue to augment them for many a day) the Socratic definition does not deal.

Socrates, therefore, never really gets to the determinant we know as sin, which is surely a defect in a definition of sin. Why is this? For if sin is indeed ignorance, then sin properly does not exist, since sin is definitely consciousness. If sin con-

sists in being ignorant of what is right, so that one consequently does what is wrong, sin does not exist. If this is sin, then it must be assumed, as Socrates also assumed, that the case does not occur of a man knowing what is right and doing what is wrong, or knowing that a thing is wrong and doing the wrong. So then, if the Socratic definition is correct, sin does not exist.

What determinant is it then that Socrates lacks in determining what sin is? It is will, defiant will. The Greek intellectualism was too happy, too naïve, too aesthetic, too ironical, too witty . . . to be able to get it sinfully into its head that a person knowingly could fail to do the good, or knowingly, with knowledge of what was right, do what was wrong. The Greek spirit proposes an intellectual categorical imperative.

Socrates explains that he who does not do the right thing has not understood it; but Christianity goes a little further back and says, it is because he will not understand it, and this in turn because he does not will the right. And in the next place, describing what properly is defiance, it teaches that a man does wrong although he understands what is right, or forbears to do the right although he understands what is right.

So then, Christianly understood, sin lies in the will, not in the intellect; and this corruption of the will goes well beyond the consciousness of the individual. This is the perfectly consistent declaration, for otherwise the question how sin began must arise with respect to each individual.

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The nature of original sin has often been examined and yet the principal category has been missing—it is *dread*, that is what really determines it; for dread is a desire for what one fears, a sympathetic antipathy; dread is an alien power which takes hold of the individual, and yet one cannot extricate

oneself from it, does not wish to, because one is afraid, but what one fears attracts one. Dread renders the individual powerless, and the first sin always happens in a moment of weakness; it therefore lacks any accountableness, but that want is the real snare.



Generally we are accustomed to say that paganism lies in sin, perhaps it might be better to say that it lies in dread. Paganism upon the whole is sensuousness, but this is a sensuousness which has a relation to spirit, although the spirit in the deepest sense is not yet posited as spirit. But precisely this possibility is dread.

If then we ask further what is the object of dread, the answer as usual must be that it is nothing. Dread and nothing regularly correspond to one another. So soon as the actuality of freedom and of the spirit is posited, dread is annulled (*aufgehoben*). But what then is signified more particularly by the nothing of dread? It is fate.

Fate is a relation to spirit as something external, it is a relation between a spirit and another which is not spirit, and with which, nevertheless, it has to stand in a spiritual relationship. Fate may mean two things exactly opposite, since it is a unity of necessity and chance. This has not always been pointed out. Much has been said about the pagan *fatum* (this being in turn variously modified in the Oriental and in the Greek interpretation) as if it were necessity. A vestige of this has been suffered to remain in the Christian view, where it came to mean fate, i.e., the accidental which cannot be made commensurable with providence. That, however, is not the true sense, for fate is precisely the unity of necessity and chance. This is ingeniously expressed by representing fate as blind, for that which walks forward blindly walks just as much by necessity as by chance. A necessity which is not conscious of itself is *eo ipso* in relation

the next instant to chance. Fate then is the nothing of dread. It is nothing, for so soon as the spirit is posited dread is annulled; but fate is, too, for thereby providence also is posited. One can say, therefore, of fate as Paul says of an idol, that 'it is nothing in the world'—but the idol nevertheless is the object of the pagan's religiousness.

So in fate the dread of the pagan has its object, its nothing. The pagan cannot come into relation with fate, for one instant it is necessity, the next instant it is chance. And yet he is in relation to it, and this relation is dread. Nearer to fate than this the pagan cannot come. The attempt paganism made was penetrating enough to cast a new light upon it. He who has to explain fate must be just as ambiguous as fate is. And this, too, the *oracle* was. But in turn the oracle might mean exactly the opposite. So the relation of the pagan to the oracle is again dread. In this fact lies the profound and inexplicable tragic of paganism. The tragic, however, does not lie in the fact that the utterance of the oracle is ambiguous, but in the fact that the pagan could not forbear to take counsel of it. He is in relation to it and dare not refrain from consulting it. Even at the moment of taking counsel he is in an ambiguous relation to it (sympathetic and antipathetic). And think then of the explanations given by the oracle!

The concept of guilt and sin does not in the deepest sense emerge in paganism. If it had emerged, paganism would have foundered upon the contradiction that one might become guilty by fate. This indeed is the supreme contradiction, and in this contradiction Christianity breaks forth. Paganism does not comprehend it; for that it is too frivolous in its definition of the concept of guilt.

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One of the lower satisfactions for guilt is the aesthetic-metaphysical conception of nemesis. Nemesis is outwardly dialectic, it is the consequence of outwardness, or the

righteousness of nature. The aesthetic is the unopened inwardness; hence that which is or should be inwardness must manifest itself as an outward perception. It is as when in a tragedy the hero of a bygone age manifests himself as spirit before the eyes of the sleeper; the spectator must behold the spirit, although its manifestation is due to the sleeper's inwardness. So it is also with the consciousness of guilt; inwardness becomes externality. Hence one could see the Furies; but precisely this visibility of theirs makes the inwardness less terrible, and precisely by reason of their visibility a limit was prescribed to them: the Furies did not dare to enter the temple. On the other hand, when one conceives the consciousness of guilt as remorse, though it were only for a single fault, this guiltiness is precisely the terrible experience, for remorse no one can see, and remorse accompanies one across every threshold. But the visibility of the Furies expresses symbolically the commensurability between the inward and the outward, whereby the consciousness of guilt is finitized and satisfaction made to consist in the suffering of temporal punishment and atonement to consist in death, wherewith everything ends in the sadly exalted feeling which is death's assuagement, that the whole thing is now over, and there is no eternal guilt.

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The concept of guilt and sin posits precisely the single individual as the single individual. There is no question of any relation to the whole world or to anything that is past. It is a question only of a man being guilty, and yet he must become guilty by fate, by that, therefore, of which there is no question, and thereby he must become that which precisely annuls the concept of fate, and this he must become by fate.

This contradiction, interpreted in a mistaken way, gives the mistaken concept of original sin; rightly understood, it



gives the correct concept, namely, that every individual is himself and the race, and that the later individual is not essentially different from the first. In the possibility of dread freedom succumbs, overwhelmed by fate. Then its actuality rises up, but with the explanation that it became guilty. Dread at the extremest point where it seems as if the individual had become guilty is not yet guilt. So guilt comes neither as a necessity nor by chance, and therefore to the concept of guilt corresponds providence.

#### THE CONCEPT OF DREAD

Innocence is ignorance. In his innocence man is not determined as spirit but is soulishly determined in immediate unity with his natural condition. Spirit is dreaming in man. This view is in perfect accord with that of the Bible, and by refusing to ascribe to man in the state of innocence a knowledge of the difference between good and evil it condemns all the notions of merit Catholicism has imagined.

In this state there is peace and repose; but at the same time there is something different, which is not dissension and strife, for there is nothing to strive with. What is it then? Nothing. But what effect does nothing produce? It begets dread. This is the profound secret of innocence, that at the same time it is dread. Dreamingly the spirit projects its own reality, but this reality is nothing, but this nothing constantly sees innocence outside of it.

Dread is the qualification of the dreaming spirit, and as such it has its place in psychology. When awake, the difference between myself and my other is posited; sleeping, it is suspended; dreaming, it is a nothing vaguely hinted at. The reality of the spirit constantly shows itself in a form which entices its possibility, but it is away as soon as one grasps after it, and it is a nothing which is able only to alarm. More it cannot do so long as it only shows itself. One almost never

sees the concept dread dealt with in psychology, and I must therefore call attention to the fact that it is different from fear and similar concepts which refer to something definite, whereas dread is the reality of freedom as possibility anterior to possibility. One does not therefore find dread in the beast, precisely for the reason that by nature the beast is not qualified by spirit.

When we consider the dialectical determinants in dread, it appears that they have precisely the characteristic ambiguity of psychology. Dread is a *sympathetic antipathy and an antipathetic sympathy*. One easily sees, I think, that this is much more truly a psychological subject than it is a concupiscence. Language confirms this completely. One speaks of a sweet dread, a sweet feeling of apprehension, one speaks of a strange dread, a shrinking dread, etc.

The dread which is posited in innocence is, in the first place, not guilt; in the second place, it is not a heavy burden, not a suffering which cannot be brought into harmony with the felicity of innocence. If we observe children, we find this dread more definitely indicated as a seeking after adventure, a thirst for the prodigious, the mysterious. The fact that there are children in whom this is not found proves nothing, for neither in the beast does it exist, and the less spirit, the less dread. This dread belongs to the child so essentially that it cannot do without it; even though it alarms him, it captivates him nevertheless by its sweet feeling of apprehension. In all nations in which the childish character is preserved as the dreaming of the spirit this dread is found, and the deeper it is, the more profound is the nation. It is only a prosaic stupidity which thinks that this is a disorganization. Dread has here the same significance that melancholy has at a far later point where freedom, after having passed through imperfect forms of its history, has to come to itself in a deeper sense.

Just as the relation of dread to its object, to something

which is nothing (language in this instance also is pregnant: it speaks of being in dread of nothing), is altogether ambiguous, so will the transition here from innocence to guilt be correspondingly so dialectical that, whatever it is, it evidently must be psychological, as it ought to be. The qualitative leap is outside of ambiguity, but he who through dread becomes guilty is innocent, for it was not he himself, but dread, an alien power which laid hold of him, a power which he loved and yet dreaded—and yet he is guilty, he who after all loved it while he feared it. There is nothing in the world more ambiguous, and therefore, this is the only psychological explanation, although (to repeat what I have said) it never occurs to it to want to be the explanation which explains the qualitative leap. Every theory about the prohibition tempting Adam or the seducer deceiving him has only for a superficial observation sufficient ambiguity, while it perverts ethics, introduces a quantitative determination, and would by the help of psychology pay man a compliment from which everyone who is ethically developed would beg to be excused, regarding it as a new and deeper seduction.

Everything turns upon dread coming into view. Man is a synthesis of the soulish and the body. But a synthesis is unthinkable if the two are not united in a third factor. This third factor is the spirit. In the state of innocence man is not merely an animal, for if at any time of his life he was merely an animal, he never would become a man. So then the spirit is present, but in a state of immediacy, a dreaming state. Forasmuch as it is present, it is in one way a hostile power, for it constantly disturbs the relation between soul and body, a relation which endures, and yet does not endure, inasmuch as it has endurance only by means of the spirit. On the other hand, it is a friendly power which has precisely the function of constituting the relationship. What then is man's relation to this ambiguous power? How is spirit

related to itself and to its situation? It is related as dread. It cannot do away with itself, so long as itself is outside of itself. Neither can man sink down into the vegetative life, for he is determined as spirit. He cannot flee from dread, for he loves it; really he does not love it, for he flees from it. Innocence has now reached its apex. It is ignorance, but not an animal brutality, but an ignorance which is qualified by spirit, but which precisely is dread, because its ignorance is about nothing. Here there is no knowledge of good and evil, etc., but the whole reality of knowledge is projected in dread as the immense nothing of ignorance.

Innocence still *is*, but one word suffices, and with that ignorance is concentrated. Innocence of course cannot understand this word; but dread has as it were obtained its first prey; instead of nothing, innocence gets an enigmatic word. So when it is related in Genesis that God said to Adam, "Only of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat," it is a matter of course that Adam did not understand this word. For, how could he have understood the difference between good and evil, seeing that this distinction was in fact consequent upon the enjoyment of the fruit?

When one assumes that the prohibition awakens the desire, one posits a knowledge instead of ignorance; for Adam would have had to have a knowledge of freedom, since his desire was to use it. The explanation therefore anticipates what was subsequent. The prohibition alarms Adam (induces a state of dread) because the prohibition awakens in him the possibility of freedom. That which passed innocence by as the nothing of dread has now entered into him, and here again it is a nothing, the alarming possibility of *being able*. What it is he is able to do, of that he has no conception; to suppose that he had some conception is to presuppose, as commonly is done, what came later, the distinction between good and evil. There is only the possi-

bility of being able, as a heightened expression of dread, because this in a more profound sense is and is not, because in a more profound sense he loves it and flees from it.

After the word of prohibition follows the word of judgment: 'Thou shalt surely die.' What it means to die, Adam, of course, cannot conceive; but if one assumes that these words were said to him, there is nothing to prevent his having a notion of the terrible. Indeed even the beast is able to understand the mimic expression and movement in the speaker's voice, without understanding the word. In case one lets the prohibition awaken desire, one may also let the word about punishment awaken a deterring conception. However, this confuses things. The terrible becomes in this instance merely dread; for Adam has not understood what was said, and here again we have only the ambiguity of dread. The infinite possibility of being able draws closer for the fact that this possibility indicates a possibility as its consequence.

Thus innocence is brought to its last extremity. It is in dread in relation to the prohibition and the punishment. It is not guilty, and yet it is in dread, as though it were lost.

Further than this psychology cannot go, but so far it can reach, and moreover it can verify this point again and again in its observation of human life.

Here in the conclusion I attached myself to the Biblical account. I let the voice of the prohibition and the punishment come from without. This naturally has tormented many thinkers. The difficulty, however, is one we need only smile at. Innocence is indeed well able to talk, inasmuch as in language it possesses the expression for everything in the spiritual order. In view of this, one need only assume that Adam talked with himself. The imperfection in the account, that another speaks to Adam about what he does not understand, is thus eliminated. Adam was able to talk. From this it does not follow that in a deeper sense he was able to under-

stand the word uttered. This applies above all to the distinction between good and evil, which is made in language, to be sure, but is only intelligible to freedom. Innocence can very well utter this distinction, but the distinction is not for it, and for it this has only the significance we have shown above.

*Dread as the Presupposition of Original Sin and as Explaining Original Sin Retrogressively in the Direction of its Origin*

Let us now examine the account of Genesis more closely, trying to put aside the fixed idea that it is a myth, and reminding ourselves that no age has been so intent upon producing myths as our own, which is producing myths at the same time that it wants to extirpate all myths.

So Adam was created, had bestowed names upon the animals (so here we have language, even though of a kind as imperfect as that of children when they are learning to recognize an animal on the ABC card), but had not found society for himself. Eve was created, formed from his rib. She stood in as intimate a relation to him as possible, and yet this was still an external relation. The existence in this sense of a thousand Adams signifies no more than one. This may be said in view of the descent of the race from one pair. Nature has no liking for a meaningless profusion. If, therefore, it is assumed that the race descends from several couples, there would have been a moment when nature had an unnecessary profusion. As soon as the fact of generation is posited no man is a superfluity, for every individual is himself and the race.

Then follows the prohibition and the judgement. But the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field. He entices woman. Even though one would call this a myth, one must remember that it does not disturb thought nor confuse the concept, as a myth of the understanding does.

The myth represents as outward that which occurred inwardly.

What first we have to remark upon here is that woman is first seduced, and that thereupon she seduces man. I have elsewhere sought to explain in what sense woman is the weaker sex, as is commonly said of her, and also to show that dread is more natural to her than to man.

In the foregoing I have several times called attention to the fact that the view presented in this work does not deny the propagation of sinfulness through generation, or in other words that sinfulness has its history in the fact of generation; I have only said that sinfulness moves by quantitative determinants, whereas sin comes in constantly by the qualitative leap of the individual. Here one can already see one significance of the quantitative process of generation. Eve is the derived being. True, she is created like Adam, but she is created out of a precedent creature. True, she is innocent like Adam, but there is as it were a presentiment of a disposition, which indeed is not yet in existence, yet may seem like a hint of the sinfulness posited by reproduction. It is the fact of being derived which predisposes the individual, without for all that making him guilty.

Now remains the serpent. I am no lover of *esprit*, and *volente Deo* I shall withstand the temptation of that serpent who, as at the beginning of time he tempted Eve, has in the course of time tempted writers to be *spirituel*. I prefer to admit bluntly that I can associate no definite thought with the serpent. The difficulty about the serpent moreover is quite a different one, namely, that it lets the temptation come from without. This conflicts directly with the teaching of the Bible, with the well-known classical passage in St. James affirming that God tempts no man and also is tempted by no one, but that every man is tempted by himself. For when one thinks that one has rescued God by letting man be tempted by the serpent, and that thus one is in accord

with St. James's saying, that God tempts no man, one then collides with the second saying, that God is not tempted by anyone, for the serpent's temptation of man was at the same time an indirect temptation directed against God, by mixing himself up in the relation between God and man; and one collides with the third saying, that every man is tempted by himself.

#### THE FALL AND SEXUALITY

The consequence was a double one; that sin came into the world and that sexuality was posited—the one being inseparable from the other. This is of the utmost importance in order to show what was man's original state. For if in fact he was not a synthesis which reposes in a third factor, one thing could not have two consequences. If he were not a synthesis of soul and body which is sustained by spirit, the sexual could never come into the world with sinfulness.

We will leave speculators out of account and simply assume the presence of sexual differentiation before the Fall, with the observation, however, that it did not strictly exist, because it does not exist in ignorance. In this respect we have support in the Scripture.

In his innocence man was, in so far as he was spirit, a dreaming spirit. The synthesis therefore is not actual; for the combining factor is precisely the spirit, and this is not yet posited as spirit. In the animal sexual diversity can be developed instinctively; but in this way man cannot have it, precisely because he is a synthesis. The instant the spirit posits itself it posits the synthesis, but to posit the synthesis it must first permeate it differentially, and the extremest expression of the sensuous is precisely the sexual. This extreme man can attain only at the instant when the spirit becomes actual; before that time he is not an animal, but neither is he properly a man. The instant he becomes a man he becomes such only by being at the same time an animal.



Sinfulness then is not sensuousness, not by any means; but without sin there is no sexuality, and without sexuality no history. A perfect spirit has neither the one nor the other, hence also the sexual difference is annulled in the resurrection, and hence, too, no angel has history. Even though the archangel Michael had recorded all the missions on which he was sent and which he performed, this nevertheless is not his history. The synthesis is first posited in the sexual as a contradiction, but at the same time, like every contradiction, as a task, the history of which begins that very instant.

Sensuousness is not sinfulness. Sensuousness in the state of innocence is not sinfulness, and yet sensuousness is present. Adam indeed was in need of food and drink, etc. The generic difference is posited in innocence. Only at the instant when sin is posited is the generic difference also posited as propensity [*Drift*].

Here as usual I must deprecate every mistaken conclusion, as if, for example, it now ought to be the true task to ignore the sensual, i.e., in an external sense to reduce it to naught. Once the sexual is posited as the extreme point of the synthesis, it is no use ignoring it. The task is of course to win it into conformity with the destiny of the spirit. (Here lie all the moral problems of the erotic.) The realization of this task is the triumph of love in a man in whom the spirit has triumphed in such a way that the sexual is forgotten and only remembered in forgetfulness. When this has come about, then sensuousness is transfigured into spirit and dread driven out.

In describing love, pure and innocent as they may represent it, all poets associate with it an element of dread. To pursue this subject more in detail is the business of an aestheticist. But why this dread? Because in the culmination of the erotic the spirit cannot take part. I will speak here with Greek candour. The spirit indeed is present, for it is this which constitutes the synthesis, but it cannot express

itself in the erotic experience; it feels itself a stranger. It says as it were to the erotic, 'My dear, I cannot be a third party here, therefore I will hide myself for the time being.' But this precisely is dread.

#### THE FALL AND THE TEMPORAL

Nature's security is due to the fact that time has no significance for it. Only in the instant does history begin. Man's sensuousness is by sin posited as sinfulness, and therefore is lower than that of the beast, and yet this is because here the higher life begins, for now begins spirit.

The instant is that ambiguous moment in which time and eternity touch one another, thereby positing *the temporal*, where time is constantly intersecting eternity and eternity constantly permeating time. Only now does that division acquire significance: the present, the past, and the future.

In making this division, attention is at once drawn to the fact that in a certain sense the future signifies more than the present and the past; for the future is in a sense the whole of which the past is a part, and in a sense the future may signify the whole. This is due to the fact that the eternal means first of all the future, or that the future is the incognito in which the eternal, as incommensurable for time, would nevertheless maintain its relations with time. Thus we sometimes speak of the future as identical with eternity: the future life-eternal life. Since the Greeks did not have in a deeper sense the concept of the eternal, neither did they have the concept of the future. One cannot therefore reproach the Greek life for losing itself in the instant, or rather we cannot even say that it was lost; for by the Greeks the temporal was conceived just as naïvely as was the sensuous, because the category of spirit was lacking.

The instant and the future posit in turn the past. If the

Greek life might be supposed to define time in any sense, it is as time past, yet without defining this by its relation to the present and the future, but defining it, like the definition of time in general, as a going-by. Here, the significance of the Platonic recollection is evident. The Greek eternity lies behind, as the past into which one enters only backwards.<sup>1</sup> However, to say that eternity is the past is to present a perfectly abstract concept of it, whether this be further defined philosophically (by the philosophical dying to the world) or historically.

In general, by seeing how the past, the future, the eternal are defined, one can see how the instant has been defined. If there is no instant, then the eternal appears to be behind, like the past. It is as though I were to picture a man walking along a road but do not assume that he takes a step, then the road behind him appears to be the distance travelled. If the instant is posited, but merely as a *discremen*, then the future is the eternal. If the instant is posited, so is the eternal—but also the future, which comes again like the past. This appears clearly in the Greek, the Jewish, and the Christian conceptions. The concept around which everything turns in Christianity, the concept which makes all things new, is the fullness of time, is the instant as eternity, and yet this eternity is at once the future and the past. If one does not give heed to this, one cannot save any concept from heretical and treasonable admixtures which destroy the concept. One does not get the past as a thing for itself but in simple continuity with the future—and with that the concepts of conversion, atonement, redemption, are resolved in the significance of world history, and resolved in the individual historical development. One does not get the future as a thing for itself—and with that the resurrection and the judgment come to naught.

<sup>1</sup> Here again one must bear in mind the category I maintain, i.e., repetition, by which one enters eternity forwards.

The instant sin is posited, the temporal is sin. We do not say that the temporal is sinfulness, any more than that the sensuous is sinfulness; but for the fact that sin is posited the temporal signifies sinfulness. Therefore that man sins who lives merely in the instant abstracted from the eternal. If Adam (to speak again by way of 'accommodation' and to speak foolishly) had not sinned, he would the same instant have passed over into eternity. On the other hand, as soon as sin is posited it does not avail to want to abstract oneself from the temporal, any more than it would from the sensuous.

#### THE FALL AND DEATH

From the characterization of the temporal as sinfulness death in turn follows as punishment. This is a progression, an analogy of which, *si placet*, may be found in the fact that, even in relation to the external phenomenon, death is more terrible in the degree that the organism is more perfect. Thus, whereas the death and decay of a plant diffuses an odour almost more delicious than its spicy breath, the decay of an animal, on the other hand, infects the air. It is true in a deeper sense that the more highly we value man, the more terrible death appears. The beast cannot properly be said to die; but when the spirit is posited as spirit, death appears terrible. The dread of death therefore corresponds to that of childbirth, though with this I do not subscribe to what in part is said truly, in part only wittily, in part enthusiastically, in part lightly, about death being a metamorphosis. At the instant of death man finds himself at the extremest point of the synthesis; the spirit cannot, as it were, be present, and yet it must wait, for the body must die. The pagan view of death—as the pagan's sensuousness was more naïve and his sense of time more carefree—was milder and more attractive, but it lacked the highest element. Let one read the

beautiful essay by Lessing on the representation of death in classical art, and one cannot deny that one is put in a mood of pleasurable sadness by this picture of the sleeping genius, or by observing the beautiful solemnity with which the genius of death bows his head and extinguishes the torch. There is, if one will, something indescribably persuasive and alluring in the thought of trusting oneself to such a guide, who is as tranquillizing as a recollection in which nothing is recollected. But on the other hand there is in turn something uncanny in following this mute guide; for he conceals nothing, his form is no incognito, as he is, so is death, and therewith all is over. There is an unfathomable sadness in seeing this guide with his friendly figure bend over the dying man and with the breath of his last kiss extinguish the last spark of life, while all he has experienced has already vanished little by little, and death only is left, which, itself unexplained, explains that the whole of life was a game in which all, the greatest and the least, went out like tapers, one by one, and at last the soul itself. But then there is implied by it also the muteness of annihilation, because the whole thing was only a childish game, and now the game is finished.



The difference between sin and tribulation (for the situation in both can be surprisingly alike) is that the temptations of sin are with desire, and the temptations of tribulations against desire. The opposite tactics have therefore to be used. Those whom sin tempts with desire do well to avoid the danger, but in relation to tribulation that is precisely the danger, the danger becomes greater next time. The voluptuary does well to fly the sight or the attraction, but the man to whom desire is not the temptation, but on the contrary a dread of coming into contact with it (he is in tribulation) does well not to avoid the sight or the attraction; for tribula-

tion really wants to frighten him continually and keep him in a state of dread.

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If a child were told that it was a sin to break its leg, what terror it would live in, and probably it would break it often, thinking that it was a sin even to have been in danger of breaking it. Suppose it were impossible for him to overcome that childhood impression. Then, out of love for his parents and in order that their blunder should not end terribly in his own ruin, he would endure it as long as possible. A horse that is harnessed to too great a load pulls with all its might—and falls down.

★   ★   ★

And sometimes people are led astray as to what sin is, and the cause is perhaps some well-meaning person, for example a man who has been very dissolute, in order to frighten his son from anything of the same kind, might explain that sexual desire was in itself sinful—forgetting that there was a difference between himself and the child—that the child was innocent and would therefore of necessity misunderstand him.

★   ★   ★

The greatest danger for a child, where religion is concerned.

The greatest danger is not that his father or tutor should be a freethinker, not even his being a hypocrite. No, the danger lies in his being a pious, God-fearing man, and in the child being convinced thereof, but that he should nevertheless notice that deep in his soul there lies hidden an unrest which, consequently, not even the fear of God and piety could calm. The danger is that the child in that situation is almost provoked to draw a conclusion about God, that God is not infinite love.

## VI

### CHRIST THE OFFENCE

About Christ it is significant, not that he sees, hears and tastes, but that he is made flesh. In Zeus and through him, sight, hearing and taste became sacred. Thus Zeus is an animal as well as being the order of the universe. Over this sight and hearing and tastes reigns Number, the sacred number, the sacred teacher, the mystery of Identity. Also fortune.

When Identity reigns, there is still the Teacher. Christ sets up over against the teacher, the Witness, the Example, just as he replaces Identity by the Individual and Fate by the Sacrifice.

RUDOLF KASSNER

There has been said much that is strange, much that is deplorable, much that is revolting about Christianity; but the most stupid thing ever said about it is, that it is to a certain degree true.

Let the speaker be offended, he is still human; let him despair of ever himself becoming a Christian, he is yet perhaps nearer than he believes; let him fight to the last drop of blood for the extermination of Christianity, he is still human—but if he is able here to say: it is true to a certain degree, then he is stupid.

★ ★ ★

There is nothing new in Christianity in such a sense that it has not been in the world before. If such were the case, Christianity would be plainly recognizable aesthetically: novelty by novelty—and again everything would be con-

fused. Sheer novelty, for example, may be the mark by which a mechanical discovery is recognizable, and this novelty is accidentally dialectic; but this novelty cannot constitute a stumbling-block or offence. In the last resort, the occasion of offence applies to an individual who is in relationship to the essential when one would make new to him that which he essentially believes he possesses. He who has no religiousness at all cannot possibly be offended at Christianity, and the reason why the possibility of offence lay so close to the Jews was that they stood closest to Christianity. If Christianity had wanted merely to add something new to the old, it could have aroused offence only relatively; but precisely because it wanted to take all the old and make it new, the offence lay so close to it. In case the novelty of Christianity had never entered into the heart of man, in the sense that before its coming man had never possessed that which he imagined was the highest, it never could have aroused offence. Precisely because its novelty is not plain but can only be apprehended by first removing an illusion, the offence is possible. The novelty of Christianity, therefore, has behind it the eternal religiousness of hidden inwardness; for in relation to the eternal a novelty is indeed a paradox. Lumped at random with other novelties, or annulled by the affirmation that among all novelties it is the most remarkable, it is aesthetic.

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The immediate relationship to God is paganism, and only after the breach has taken place can there be any question of a true God-relationship. But this breach is precisely the first act of inwardness in the direction of determining the truth as inwardness. Nature is, indeed, the work of God, but only the handiwork is directly present, not God. Is not this to behave, in His relationship to the individual, like an elusive author who nowhere sets down his result in large type, or



gives it to the reader beforehand in a preface? And why is God elusive? Precisely because He is the truth, and by being elusive desired to keep men from error. The observer of nature does not have a result immediately set before him, but must by himself be at pains to find it, and thereby the direct relationship is broken. But this breach is precisely the act of self-activity, the irruption of inwardness, the first determination of the truth as inwardness.

Or is not God so unnoticeable, so secretly present in His works, that a man might very well live his entire life, be married, become known and respected as citizen, father, and captain of the hunt, without ever having discovered God in His works, and without ~~that~~ having received any impression of the infinitude of the eternal, because he helped himself out with what constitutes an analogy to the speculative confusion of the ethical with the historical process, in that he helped himself out by having recourse to the customs and traditions prevailing in the town where he happened to live? As a mother admonishes her child when it sets off for a party: 'Now be sure to behave yourself, and do as you see the other well-behaved children do,'—so he might manage to live by conducting himself as he sees others do. He would never do anything first, and he would never have any opinion which he did not first know that others had; for this 'others' would be for him the first. Upon extraordinary occasions he would behave as when at a banquet a dish is served, and one does not know how it should be eaten: he would look around until he saw how the others did it, and so forth. Such a man might perhaps know many things, perhaps even know the System by rote; he might be an inhabitant of a Christian country, and bow his head whenever the name of God was mentioned; he would perhaps also see God in nature when in company with others who saw God; he would be a pleasant society man—and yet he would have been deceived by the direct nature.

of his relationship to the truth, to the ethical, and to God.

If God were to reveal Himself in human form and grant a direct relationship, by giving Himself, for example, 'the figure of a man six yards tall, then our hypothetical society man and captain of the hunt would doubtless have his attention aroused. But the spiritual relationship to God in truth, when God refuses to deceive, requires precisely that there be nothing remarkable about the figure, so that the society man would have to say: 'There is nothing whatever to see.' When God has nothing obviously remarkable about Him, the society man is perhaps deceived by not having his attention at all aroused. But this is not God's fault, and the actuality of such a deception is at the same time the constant possibility of the truth. But if God has anything obviously remarkable, He deceives men because they have their attention called to what is untrue, and this direction of attention is at the same time the impossibility of the truth. In paganism the direct relationship is idolatry; in Christendom, everyone knows that God cannot so reveal Himself. But this knowledge is by no means inwardness, and in Christendom it may well happen to one who knows everything by rote that he is left altogether 'without God in the world', in a sense impossible in paganism, which did have the untrue relationship of paganism. Idolatry is indeed a sorry substitute, but that the item *God* should be entirely omitted is still worse.



In relation to the absolute there is only one tense: the present. For him who is not contemporary with the absolute—for him it has no existence. And as Christ is the absolute, it is easy to see that with respect to Him there is only one situation: that of contemporaneousness. The five, the seven, the fifteen, the eighteen hundred years are neither

here nor there; they do not change Him, neither do they in any way reveal who He was, for who He is is revealed only to faith.

But this is the difference between poetry and reality: contemporaneousness. The difference between poetry and history is clearly this, that history is what really occurred, whereas poetry is the possible, the imaginary, the poetized. But what really occurred (the past) is not (except in a special sense, i.e., in contrast with poetry) the real. It lacks the determinant which is the determinant of truth (as inwardness) and of all religiousness, the for thee. The past is not reality—for me: only the contemporary is reality for me. What thou dost live contemporaneous with is reality—for thee. And thus every man can be contemporary only with the age in which he lives—and then with one thing more: with Christ's life on earth; for Christ's life on earth, sacred history, stands for itself alone outside history.

There is a difference between truth and truths, and this difference is made especially evident by the definition of truth as being, or it is evident from the fact that a distinction is drawn between the *way* and the final decision, what is attained at the end, the *result*.

A man discovers something, gunpowder, for example. He, the discoverer, has perhaps spent many, many years of his life pondering and ruminating; perhaps many men before him have in vain spent a long time in a similar way—now he succeeds, now powder is discovered. At that same instant the way as good as drops out, to such a degree it is shortened. What it took him twenty years to do, another man, by the help of his advance, can do, if he goes about it rightly, in the space of half an hour. The twenty years stand in an entirely fortuitous relation to the invention; one cannot properly say that he employed twenty years in the discovery of gunpowder; no, he, too, actually discovered gunpowder in half an hour; one might say more justly that in twenty years he

did not discover gunpowder, in a certain sense these years have no value, since they did not contribute to the discovery but represent a vain attempt to discover gunpowder, or were spent in not discovering powder. Suppose it could be proved conclusively that he laboured full twenty years to discover gunpowder, and did not discover it—in this case *the way* has absolutely no significance in itself. Suppose that the discoverer made his discovery as he was coming home drunk from a party and stumbled over the kerb-stone—the way is a thing absolutely indifferent, in this case the discoverer would merely be on a par with the dog which discovered purple,<sup>1</sup> yet his discovery would have been just as valuable to the human race, which might perhaps have called him, if the discovery had been of a different sort, the benefactor of his race—but not its teacher, for to be a teacher, especially a teacher of the race, ‘the teacher of mankind’ answers to the conception of truth as ‘the way’.

But it is different when truth is being, when it is ‘the way’. Here it is not possible for any essential difference to exist as between the foregoer and the successor, or as between one generation and another, even if the world were to last for 1,800 years, for truth is not different from the way but is the way itself. Christ was the truth. He was the way, or He was the way in the sense that the truth is the way. The fact that He has travelled the way to the end does not alter anything in the situation of the successor, who, if he is of the truth and desires to be of the truth, can be so only by following ‘the way’; the fact that at a given time there have lived thirty generations which have followed the way alters nothing in the situation of the next generation or of every individual in it who must always begin over again at the same point at the beginning of the way in order to follow it.

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the story that purple dye was discovered when a dog thrust its muzzle into the shell of a mussel which secretes this colour.

So there is no occasion or opportunity for triumphing; for only he who has followed the way to the end could triumph, but he is no longer in this world, he has gone up on high, as Christ also was the way when He ascended up to heaven. If, however, a late-comer would take occasion to triumph because someone before him had followed the way, this would be just as foolish as if a student were to triumph because another student had passed his examination.

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In the first ages of Christendom, when even erroneous doctrines bore a stamp which testified unmistakably to the fact that people nevertheless knew what it was all about, the error with regard to the God-Man took one or another of two forms: either that of eliminating the qualification God (Ebionitism), or that of eliminating the qualification man (Gnosticism). In the modern age on the whole, which bears a stamp which unmistakably witnesses to the fact that people do not know what it is all about, the error is a different one and far more dangerous. By force of lecturing they have transformed the God-Man into that speculative unity of God and man *sub specie aeterni* manifested, that is to say, in the nullipresent medium of pure being, whereas in truth the God-Man is the unity of God and an individual man in an actual historical situation; or else they have simply done away with Christ, cast Him out and taken possession of His teaching, almost regarding Him at last as one does an anonymous author—the doctrine is the principal thing, is the whole thing. Hence it is that they vainly conceive of Christianity simply as *direct* communication, far more direct in its simplicity than the profound dicta of the professor. They have nonsensically forgotten that here the Teacher is more important than the teaching.

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The object of faith is the reality of another, and the relationship is one of infinite interest. The object of faith is not a doctrine, for then the relationship would be intellectual, and it would be of importance not to botch it, but to realize the maximum intellectual relationship. The object of faith is not a teacher with a doctrine; for when a teacher has a doctrine, the doctrine is *eo ipso* more important than the teacher, and the relationship is again intellectual, and it again becomes important not to botch it, but to realize the maximum intellectual relationship. The object of faith is the reality of the teacher, that the teacher really exists. The answer of faith is therefore unconditionally yes or no. For it does not concern a doctrine, as to whether the doctrine is true or not; it is the answer to a question concerning a fact: 'Do you or do you not suppose that he has really existed?' And the answer, it must be noted, is with infinite passion.

The maximum of attainment within the sphere of the intellectual, namely, to realize an entire indifference as to the reality of the teacher, is in the sphere of faith at the opposite end of the scale. The maximum of attainment within the sphere of faith is to become infinitely interested in the reality of the teacher.



The opposition in faith is the Christian one, which in a Christian way transforms the definition of all ethical concepts, giving them one distillation the more. At the bottom of this opposition lies the decisive Christian concept, 'before God,' a determinant which in turn stands in relation to the decisive criterion of Christianity: the absurd, the paradox, the possibility of offence.

What is offence? Offence is unhappy admiration. It is therefore akin to envy, but it is an envy which is turned against oneself, or, more exactly, envy which is worst of all against oneself. The narrow-mindedness of the natural man

cannot welcome for itself the extraordinary which God has intended for him; so he is offended.

The degree of the offence depends upon what passion a man has for admiration. The more prosaic men, devoid of imagination and passion, and who therefore are not apt to admire, they, too, may be offended, but they confine themselves to saying, 'Such a thing I can't get through my head, I let it alone.' These are the sceptics. But the more passion and imagination a man has, the nearer he also is in a certain sense (that is, in the possibility) to being able to become a believer—*nota bene!* by adoringly humbling himself under the extraordinary—and with that, all the more passionate is the offence, which at last cannot be contented with less than the expression: annihilated and trodden in the dust.

#### THE GOD-MAN IS A 'SIGN'

What is to be understood by a 'sign'? A sign is the negation of immediacy, or a second state of being, differing from the first. It is not thereby affirmed that the sign is not something immediate, in other words, that as a sign it is not the immediate thing it is. A nautical mark is a sign. Immediately it is a post, a light, or some such thing, but a sign it is not immediately, that it is a sign is something different from what it immediately is.

A 'sign of contradiction'<sup>1</sup> is a sign which contains in itself a contradiction. There is no contradiction in the fact that a thing is immediately this or that and at the same time a sign; for something there must be immediately existing to serve as a sign; where there is literally nothing there is no sign. On the other hand, a sign of contradiction is a sign which contains in its very constitution a contradiction. To justify the name of 'sign' there must be something whereby it draws

<sup>1</sup> This is S. K.'s version of the phrase in Luke 2: 34, which is familiar to us as 'a sign which shall be spoken against'.

attention to itself or to the contradiction. But the contradictions contained in it must not be such as to cancel the two terms and bring the sign to naught, nor must it be such that the sign becomes the opposite of a sign, an absolute secret.—A communication which is the unity of jest and earnest is such a sign of contradiction. It is not by any means a direct communication, it is impossible for him who receives it to tell *directly* which is which, because the communication does not *directly* communicate either jest or earnest. The earnestness of such communication lies in another place, or in a second instance, in the intent of making the receiver independently active—which, dialectally understood, is the highest earnestness in the case of communication. Such a communication, however, must make sure of something whereby it draws attention to itself, whereby it prompts and invites one to take heed of the communication. And, on the other hand, the unity of jest and earnest must not be any means of madness, for then there would be no communication; yet a communication in which either jest or earnestness absolutely predominates is direct communication.

A sign is not what it immediately is, for no sign is immediately a sign, since 'sign' is a qualification of reflection. A sign of contradiction is one which draws attention to itself, and then, when attention is fixed upon it, shows that it contains a contradiction.

And in the Scripture the God-Man is called a sign of contradiction—but what contradiction might there be in the speculative unity of God and man in general? No, in that there is no contradiction; but the contradiction, the greatest possible, the qualitative contradiction, is that between being God and being an individual man. To be a sign is to be, beside what one immediately is, also another thing; to be a sign of contradiction is to be another thing which stands in opposition to what one immediately is. Immediately He is



an individual man, just like other men, a lowly, insignificant man; but the contradiction is *that He is God*.

Yet in order that this may not result in a contradiction which exists for no one or does not exist for everyone (as when a mystification succeeds so well that its effect is null), some factor must be present to draw attention to it. The miracle serves essentially this purpose, and so does a single direct assertion about being God. Yet neither the miracle, nor the single direct assertion, is to be regarded as absolutely direct communication; for in this wise the contradiction would *eo ipso* be removed. This is readily to be seen, so far as the miracle is concerned, since that is an object of faith; and as for the other point, that the single direct communication is not yet quite a direct communication, this will be shown later.

The God-Man is the sign of contradiction. And why? Because, replies the Scripture, He shall reveal the thoughts of hearts.

The God-Man is an individual man, not a fantastic unity which never has existed except *sub specie aeterni*; and He is least of all a lecturer who teaches directly for scribbling students or dictates paragraphs to stenographers; He does just the opposite, He reveals the thoughts of the hearts. Oh, it is so comfortable to be a listener or a transcriber when everything goes on so directly—but let these gentlemen who listen and transcribe be on their guard . . . it is the thoughts of *their* hearts that shall be revealed.

And this only the sign of contradiction can do: it draws attention to itself, and then it presents a contradiction. There is something which makes it impossible for one to desist from looking—and lo! while one looks, one sees as in a mirror, one gets to see oneself, or He, the sign of contradiction, sees into the depths of one's heart while one is gazing into the contradiction. A contradiction placed directly in front of a man—if only one can get him to look upon it—

is a mirror; while he is judging, what dwells within him must be revealed. It is a riddle, but while he is guessing, what dwells within him is revealed by how he guesses. The contradiction puts before him a choice, and while he is choosing, he himself is revealed.

*The Form of a Servant Means Unrecognizableness (an Incognito)*

What is unrecognizableness? It means not to appear in one's proper role, as, for example, when a policeman appears in plain clothes.

And so unrecognizableness, the absolute unrecognizableness, is this: being God, to be also an individual man. To be the individual man, or an individual man (whether it be a distinguished or a lowly man is here irrelevant), is the greatest possible, the infinitely qualitative, remove from being God and, therefore, the profoundest incognito.

Most people now living in Christendom live, we may be sure, in the vain persuasion that, had they lived contemporary with Christ, they would at once have known and recognized Him in spite of His unrecognizableness. They are quite unconscious that they thereby betray the fact that they do not know themselves, and quite unaware that this notion of theirs, notwithstanding that it is certainly meant as praise of Christ, is really blasphemy, the blasphemy which is involved in the priest-prelate's undialectical loquacious climax: Christ was God *to such a degree* that one could at once perceive it directly—instead of saying as they ought: He was very God, and therefore *to such a degree* God that He was unrecognizable, so that it was not flesh and blood, but the exact opposite of flesh and blood, which prompted Peter to recognize Him.

And Christ has been completely poetized. They make of Him a man who was conscious of being the extraordinary figure, but of whom the contemporary age failed to take

notice. So far this may be true. But they poetize farther, they go on to imagine that Christ would fain have been recognizable directly for the extraordinary figure He was, but that the contemporary age by reason of its blindness and iniquity would not understand Him. They betray by this that they do not understand in the least what an incognito is. It was Christ's free will and determination from all eternity to be incognito.

He is God, but chooses to become the individual man. This, as we have seen, is the profoundest incognito, or the most impenetrable unrecognizableness that is possible; for the contradiction between being God and being an individual man is the greatest possible, the infinitely qualitative contradiction. But this is His will, His free determination, therefore an almightily maintained incognito. Indeed, He has in a certain sense, by suffering Himself to be born, bound Himself once for all; His incognito is so almightily maintained that in a way He is subjected to it, and the reality of His suffering consists in the fact that it is not merely apparent, but that in a sense the assumed incognito has power over Him. Only thus is there in the deepest sense real seriousness in the assertion that He became 'very man', and hence also He experienced the extremest suffering of feeling Himself forsaken of God, so that at no moment was He beyond suffering, but actually in it, and He encountered the purely human experience that reality is even more terrible than possibility, that He who had freely assumed unrecognizableness yet really suffers as though He were entrapped in unrecognizableness or had entrapped Himself. It is a strange sort of dialectic: that He who almightily . . . binds Himself, and does it so almightily that He actually feels Himself bound, suffers under the consequences of the fact that He lovingly and freely determined to become an individual man—to such a degree was it seriously true that He became a real man; but thus it must be if He were to become the sign

of contradiction which reveals the thoughts of the hearts. It is the imperfection of a man's disguise that he has the arbitrary faculty of annulling it at any instant. A disguise is the more completely serious the more one knows how to restrain this faculty and to make it less and less possible. But the unrecognizableness of the God-Man is an incognito almightily maintained, and the divine seriousness consists precisely in the fact that it is so almightily maintained that He Himself suffers under His unrecognizableness in a purely human way.

### *The Impossibility of Direct Communication*

The opposite of direct communication is indirect communication. The latter can be produced in either of two ways.

Indirect communication can be produced by the art of reduplicating the communication. This art consists in reducing oneself, the communicator, to nobody, something purely objective, and then incessantly composing qualitative opposites into unity. An example of such indirect communication is, so to compose jest and earnest that the composition is a dialectical knot—and with this to be nobody. If anybody is to profit by this sort of communication, he must himself undo the knot for himself. Another example is to bring defence and attack together in such a unity that no one can say directly whether one is attacking or defending, so that both the most zealous partisans of the cause and its bitterest enemies can regard one as an ally—and with this to be nobody, an absentee, an objective something, not a personal man.

But indirect communication can be brought about also in another way, by the relationship between the communication and the communicator. All communication which has regard to 'existence' requires a communicator—in other

words, the communication is the reduplication of that which is communicated; to reduplicate is to 'exist' in what one understands. But the mere fact that there is a communicator who himself exists in that which he communicates does not suffice to characterize such communication as indirect communication. If, however, the communicator himself is dialectically qualified, and his own essential *being* requires reflective definition, all direct communication is impossible.

Such is the case with the God-Man. He is a sign, the sign of contradiction, and so all direct communication is impossible. For if the communication by a communicator is to be direct, it does not suffice that the communication itself is direct, but the communicator himself must be directly qualified. If not, then even the most direct communication of such a communicator becomes, by reason of the communicator, i.e., by reason of what the communicator is, non-direct communication.

When one says directly, 'I am God; the Father and I are one,' that is direct communication. But when he who says it is an individual man, quite like other men, then this communication is not just perfectly direct; for it is not just perfectly clear and direct that an individual man should be God—although what he says is perfectly direct. By reason of the communicator the communication contains a contradiction, it becomes indirect communication, it puts to thee a choice, whether thou wilt believe Him or not.

### *To Refuse to Employ Direct Communication is to Require Faith*

The possibility of offence, which is the situation at the beginning, is in the deepest understanding of it an expression for the necessity of calling attention, or for the fact that there is required of man the greatest attention possible, (on a scale entirely different from the merely human, for it is on the divine scale) with respect to the decision to become a

believer. Direct communication also, perhaps, seeks to make the receiver of it attentive as well as it can; it begs and beseeches him, impresses upon his heart the importance of it, warns and threatens, etc.—all of which is direct communication, and hence there is not seriousness enough in it for the highest decision, nor does it sufficiently arouse attention.

No, the beginning is made by refusing direct communication—that is real seriousness. Frightful is the possibility of offence, and yet (like the Law in relation to the Gospel) it belongs essentially to seriousness. There is no direct communication, and no direct reception—there is a choice. It does not, like direct communication, employ enticement and warning and threatening—and then gradually and quite unobserved the transition is brought about little by little, to the point of accepting it, of regarding oneself as convinced by it, of being of the opinion, etc. No, an altogether distinct sort of reception is required—that of faith. And faith itself has a dialectical quality—and the receiver is the one who is revealed, whether he will believe or be offended.

That indirect communication requires faith can be demonstrated very simply in the case of a purely human relationship, if only it be remembered that faith in the most eminent sense has to do with the God-Man. Let us carry out the demonstration, and to this end let us take the relationship between two lovers. I assume first this relationship: the lover gives the beloved assurance of his love in the most burning expressions, and his whole nature corresponds to this assurance, is almost sheer adoration—then he asks the beloved, '*Do you believe that I love you?*' Then the beloved answers, '*Yes, I believe.*' This assuredly is the way we use the word. Now let us assume, on the other hand, that the lover gets a notion to wish to put the beloved to the test, whether she believes in him. What does he do then? He cuts out all direct communication, he transforms himself into a duplex being; to all appearance it is as plausible to take him for a

deceiver as for the faithful lover. Thus he makes himself a riddle. But what is a riddle? A riddle is a question. And what does the question ask? It asks whether she believes him. —I do not decide whether he has a right to do this, I am merely following the indications of thought; and in any case it should be remembered that the maieutic teacher does this very thing up to a certain point; he erects the dialectical duplexity, but with the opposite intent of turning the other person away from him, of turning him in upon himself, of making him free, not of drawing the man towards him.—One will easily see what is the difference in the lover's behaviour in these two instances. In the first case he asks the question directly: 'Do you believe me?' In the second case the question is the same, but he has made himself an interrogation. He may perhaps have cause to regret bitterly that he presumed to do such a thing—I am not concerned here with such possibilities, I am merely following the indications of thought. And from a dialectical point of view it is quite certain that the latter method is a far more fundamental way of eliciting faith. The aim of the latter method is to reveal the heart of the beloved in a choice; for in this duplex possibility she is obliged to choose which character she believes to be the true one. If then she chooses the good possibility, it is revealed that she believes in him. This reveals itself, for he does nothing whatever to assist her; on the contrary, by his duplexity he has placed her in a completely solitary position, without any support whatsoever. He is a duplexity, and now the question is what judgement she will form of him; but he has another understanding of the situation, for he perceives that it is not he that is being judged, but that she is revealed by the way she judges.

In the relationship between man and man the one man must be content with the assurance of the other that he believes him. No man has the right to make himself an object of faith for another man. In case one man employs

dialectical duplexity in relationship with another, he must employ it maieutically, for the sake of not becoming for the other the object of faith or anything approximating to it. The dialectical duplexity is a transitory factor, and in the next stage it becomes absolute untruthfulness if, instead of employing it merely to parry with, he presumptuously permits another man to regard him as an object of faith. Yet even with respect to maieutic teaching I do not decide how far, from a Christian point of view, it can be approved.

But only the God-Man can do no other and must require that He be the object of faith. If He is not this, He is an idol—hence He must refuse direct communication because He must require faith.

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Just as the highest principles of thought can be proved only negatively for an existing individual, and the attempts to furnish a positive demonstration of them immediately reveal that the proponent, in so far as he nevertheless really remains an existing individual, is about to become fantastic, so also it is the case that the existential relationship to the absolute good is determined for an existing individual only through the negative—the relation to an eternal happiness only through suffering, just as also the certainty of the faith which sustains a relationship to an eternal happiness is determined through its uncertainty. If I take the uncertainty way—in order to get a still greater certainty—then I do not get a believer in his humility, in fear and trembling, but I get an aesthetic coxcomb, a devil of a fellow, who wishes, speaking loosely, to fraternize with God, but who, speaking precisely, stands in no relationship to God whatever.

#### PERFECT LOVE

Perfect love means to love the one through whom one



became unhappy. But no man has the right to demand to be thus loved.

God can demand it; that is infinite majesty. And it is true of the man of religion, in the strictest sense of the word, that in loving God he is loving him through whom he became unhappy, humanly speaking, for this life—although blessed.

SUFFERING, THE SIGN OF THE RELATION TO GOD,  
OR THE LOVE OF GOD

It is easy to see that this thought might be dangerous. If suffering is the characteristic of the relation to God then the individual might stoically wish, as it were, to challenge God to send him suffering in order to show that he can love God all the same. That is presumption and as unlike the fear of God as is well possible, since it is egoism which impertinently wishes to measure itself against God.—From another point of view: one might grow afraid at the thought that suffering is the characteristic of the relation to God, so that one dared not embark upon it at all, because it was like challenging God to continue the suffering. And one might grow so afraid as to fly away from this thought (which is nevertheless true Christianity), back to that which is not really Christianity, but only an approximation to Christianity.

The following must therefore be noted. (1) One must never desire suffering. No, you have only to remain in the condition of praying for happiness on earth. If a man desire suffering then it is as though he were able, by himself, to solve this terror: that suffering is the characteristic of God's love. And that is precisely what he cannot do; it is 'the spirit' which witnesses with him that it is so; and consequently he must not himself have desired suffering. In any case the desire for suffering would have to be understood as meaning that he begged at the same time for 'the spirit', so that he did.

not beg for suffering in and for itself, but for suffering as the condition for receiving 'the witness of the spirit'. Yet this, too, is so high that care is necessary and there must be frequent rest in lower forms.

(2) You must certainly dare, for to dare (for the truth etc.) is Christianity. But for the time being you must not dare in such a way that there is no possibility, humanly speaking, of your coming out on top, as one says. That is to say: there is the possibility of failure, and also the possibility of success.

But if suffering cannot be, humanly speaking and understood, avoided, and you nevertheless understand yourself before God in being obliged and willing to dare: yet suffering itself must never be the *γέλος*, you must not dare in order to suffer, for that is presumptuous, and is to tempt God. To expose yourself to suffering for the sake of suffering is a presumptuous personal impertinence and forwardness towards God, as though you were challenging God to a contest. But when it is for the cause—even though you see that the suffering is humanly speaking unavoidable, just go on and dare. You do not dare for the sake of suffering, but you dare in order not to betray the cause.



Here is a dialectical problem. It may be a tribulation, but it may also be true: that a man demands too much of God, desires to be altogether too spiritual and so in a sense wants to love God more or otherwise than God allows, if in relation to all his suffering and temptation he only ever wishes to be helped spiritually. There are certain innocent human expedients (distraction, physical recreation) which a man may not overlook without asking too much of God. But that is the dialectical point. For sometimes it is, or with some particular people it is, a form of human indolence which does not desire to be spirit and so immediately seizes hold of

the easiest remedies and then says that is because he dares not demand too much of God. But it may also be spiritual pride, or a strained anxiousness which really demands too much of God and of oneself. To the first man one must say: no, do not spare yourself, endure it at all costs. To others one must say: do not presume, and do not torment yourself.

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A childish orthodoxy accentuates Christ's suffering erroneously. By the most romantic definitions, which are anything but apt to enjoin silence upon the human understanding (for it is easy enough for it to perceive that this is *galimatias*), it accentuates the frightfulness of the suffering, Christ's delicate body which suffers so prodigiously; or it accentuates, qualitatively and comparatively, the fact that He who was holy, the purest and most innocent of all, had to suffer. The paradox is that Christ came into the world *in order to suffer*. Take this away, and then an army of analogies takes by storm the impregnable fortress of the paradox. That in the world the innocent have to suffer (heroes of intellectuality and art, the martyrs of the truth, the quiet martyrs of womanhood, etc.) is not absolutely paradoxical but humorous. But the purpose of the martyrs when they came into the world was not to suffer; their purpose was this or that, and to accomplish it they had to suffer, to bear suffering, to go to their death. But suffering is not their *telos*. Religiousness comprehends suffering, defines it teleologically for the sufferer, but suffering is not *telos*. If therefore the suffering of the martyrs in general is no analogy to Christ's suffering, no more is the suffering of the believer; and the absolute paradox is recognizable by the fact that every analogy is a fallacy.

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The invitation to a religious discourse is quite simply *as*.

follows: 'Come hither all ye who labour and are heavy laden'—and the discourse presupposes that all are sufferers, aye, that all ought to be. The speaker is not to go down among his audience and pick out one, if there be such a one, and say to him: 'No, you are altogether too fortunate to need my address,' for when such a thing is heard from the mouth of a religious speaker it ought to be made to sound like the most biting irony. The distinction between fortunate and unfortunate human beings is merely a jest, and therefore the speaker should say: 'We are all sufferers, but what we strive for is to be glad in the midst of our suffering; there sits the fortunate man for whom everything, literally everything, succeeds as in a fairy tale, but woe unto him if he is not a sufferer.'



If a man will hold fast to this which is indeed Christ's own saying, that the truth is the way, he will perceive ever more clearly that a Church triumphant in this world is a vain conceit, that in this world there can be question only of a Church militant. But the Church militant is related to and feels itself drawn to Christ in lowliness; the Church triumphant has taken the Church of Christ in vain.

Such a conception as that of 'the congregation' about which people in these days especially have been so busy,<sup>1</sup> is really, as applied to this life, an impatient anticipation of eternity. What properly corresponds to the notion of combat is the single individual—at least when the combat is understood in a spiritual and Christian sense, not in the material sense of engaging in a pitched battle, which does not so much depend upon the individual as upon how many thousands are engaged, how many cannon they have, etc.

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to Grundtvig's movement, to which S. K.'s brother Peter belonged. 'The congregation' (*Menighed*) was used rather sentimentally, like Royce's 'Beloved Community'.

The Christian combat is always waged by the individual, for this precisely is spirit, that everyone is an individual before God, that 'fellowship' is a lower category than 'the single individual', which everyone can be and should be. And even though the individuals were numbered by thousands and thus were fighting in union, yet, Christianly understood, it is each individual that fights, and in addition to fighting in union, he fights at the same time within himself and shall as an individual give account on the day of Judgement, when his life as an individual shall be on trial. 'The congregation' therefore belongs properly to eternity; 'the congregation' is at rest what 'the individual' is in unrest. But this life is precisely the time of testing, the time of unrest, hence 'the congregation' has not its abiding place in time but only in eternity, where it is the assembly at rest of all the individuals who stood the test of combat and probation.

So long as this world lasts and the Christian Church within it, it is a militant Church, yet it has the promise that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. But woe, woe to the Christian Church if it would triumph in this world, for then it is not the Church that triumphs, but the world has triumphed. Then the heterogeneity of Christianity and the world is done away with, the world has won, Christianity lost. Then Christ is no more the God-Man, but only a distinguished man whose life is homogeneous with the development of the race. Then eternity is done away with, and the stage for the perfection of all is transferred to the temporal. Then the way of life is no longer strait, nor the gate narrow, nor are there few that find it; no, then the way is broad and the gate wide open—the gates of hell have prevailed, and many, yea, all find entrance. Christ never desired to conquer in this world; He came to the world to suffer, *that* is what He called conquering. But when human impatience and the impudent forwardness which ascribes to Christ its own thoughts and conceptions, instead of letting its thoughts and

conceptions be transformed by Christ—when this got the upper hand, then, in the old human way, to conquer meant to conquer in this world, and thus Christianity is done away with. It was not a petty quarrel Christ had with the world, so that substantially it was His own fault that He didn't get along better with the world; no, love of God is hatred of the world. And the day when Christianity and the world become friends Christianity is done away with. Then there is no more any question of Christ coming again to judge the world; no, then the judgement has been passed upon Him that substantially He was a visionary, an impetuous man; for had He not been so over-impetuous, He would have been able to get along very well with the world, He would not have been put to death, for which there was no need at all, and so He would have become great in the world, as did His disciples in the triumphant Church.

#### THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE MAJORITY

The Christianity of the majority consists roughly of these two notions, which might be called the two most doubtful extremities of Christianity (or as the parson says, the two things which must be clung to in life and death): first of all the saying about 'the little child', that one becomes a Christian as a little child, that of such is the Kingdom of Heaven; the second is the thief on the cross.

People live by virtue of the former—in death they reckon upon consoling themselves with the example of the thief.

That is the sum of their Christianity; and correctly defined it is a mixture of childishness and crime.

#### THE DOMESTIC GOOSE

##### *A Moral Tale*

. Try to imagine for a moment that geese could talk—that

they had so arranged things that they, too, had their divine worship and their church-going.

Every Sunday they would meet together and a gander would preach.

The sermon was essentially the same each time—it told of the glorious destiny of geese, of the noble end for which their maker had created them—and every time his name was mentioned all the geese curtsied and all the ganders bowed their heads. They were to use their wings to fly away to distant pastures to which they really belonged; for they were only pilgrims on this earth.

The same thing happened each Sunday. Thereupon the meeting broke up and they all waddled home, only to meet again next Sunday for divine worship and waddle off home again—but that was as far as they ever got. They throve and grew fat, plump and delicious—and at Michaelmas they were eaten—and that was as far as they ever got. It never came to anything. For while their conversation on Sundays was all high-sounding, on Mondays they would tell each other what had happened to the goose who had taken the end set before them quite seriously, and in spite of many tribulations had tried to use the wings its creator had bestowed upon it.

All that was, indeed, common knowledge among the geese, but of course no one mentioned the subject on Sundays, for as they observed, it would then have been quite obvious that to attend divine service would have been to fool both God and themselves.

Among the geese were several who looked ill and wan, and all the other geese said—there, you see what comes of taking flying seriously. It is all because they go about meditating on flying that they get thin and wan and are not blessed by the grace of God as we are; for that is why we grow fat, plump, and delicious.

And so next Sunday off they went to divine service, and

the old gander preached of the glorious end for which their maker (and at that point all the geese curtsied, and the ganders bowed their heads) had created them, and of why they were given wings.

And the same is true of divine worship in Christianity.

★ ★ ★

The parson (collectively understood) does, indeed, preach about those glorious ones who sacrificed their lives for the truth. As a rule the parson is justified in assuming that there is no one present in the church who would entertain the notion of venturing upon such a thing. When he is sufficiently assured of this by reason of the private knowledge he has of the congregation as its pastor, he preaches glibly, declaims vigorously, and wipes away the sweat. If, on the following day, one of those strong and silent men, a quiet, modest, perhaps even insignificant-looking man, were to visit the parson at his house announcing himself as one whom the parson had carried away by his eloquence, so that he had now resolved to sacrifice his life for the truth—what would the parson say? He would address him thus: 'Why, merciful Father in heaven! How did such an idea ever occur to you? Travel, divert yourself, take a laxative.' And if this plain-looking man were to fix his eye upon him with unaltered calm, and holding him with this glance were to continue to talk about his resolution, but with the modest expressions which a resolute man always uses—then the parson would surely think, 'Would that this man were far away!'

#### THE HIGHEST AND THE LOWEST—EXISTENTIALLY

Let us begin with the poet. What the poet uses and makes immortal in his song, for example Juliet killing herself out of sorrow—that happens rarely enough in everyday life.

Now ethics and religion describe that aesthetic conduct as



despair, and they value the very reverse, for example the decision to live in Juliet's situation.

But then along come the parsons and with them, as always, nonsense. Karen and Maren do not kill themselves even though they have lost their loves—*ergo* these noble creatures are advanced by the noble clergy, far above Juliet. But the fact that outwardly a narrow-minded bourgeoisie has much in common with the noblest expression of ethics and religion does not worry them.

The parsons do not notice the difficulty: that if a life, such as poets can make use of, is as rare as the poets say, how rare must a truly moral and religious existence be! No, the parsons canonize bourgeois mediocrity. We Protestants have done away with the Catholic canonization of ascetics and martyrs, etc.—as a substitute those interested in the bourgeois corporation are canonized and, of course, they are canonized by the last clerical order to appear in Protestantism: the office seekers and place hunters.



Bishop Sailer,<sup>1</sup> in a homily for the Fifth Sunday in Lent, preaches on the text John 8: 47-51. He chooses these two verses: 'He that is of God neareth God's word,' and 'If a man keep my sayings, he shall never die,' and continues: 'in these words of the Lord three great mysteries are solved, mysteries over which men have racked their brains from the beginning of time.' There we have it. The word 'mystery', and particularly the 'three great mysteries', and then in the next phrase, 'over which men have racked their *brains*', immediately leads one's thoughts on to the profound in the intellectual sense: pondering, searching, speculation. Yet how can a simple apodictic statement be profound, an apodictic statement which is only what it is because so and so has said it; a statement which is not to be understood or

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Sailer, Bishop of Regensburg, tutor of Ludwig I of Bavaria.

fathomed, but simply believed? How can any ~~man~~ imagine that a mystery is solved, in a learned speculative way, by a direct statement, by an assertion? The question is, after all: Is there an eternal life? The answer: There is an eternal life. What, in heaven's name, is profound about that? If Christ had not said it, and if Christ was not who He said He was, then if the statement itself is profound, it must be possible to discover its profundity. Let us take the example of Herr Peterson, the theological student, who also says, 'There is an eternal life.' Would it ever strike anyone to tax him with profundity on account of a direct statement? The decisive thing is not the statement, but the fact that it was Christ who said it; but the confusing thing is that, as though in order to tempt people to believe, they talk about profundity. In order to speak correctly a Christian priest would have to say, quite simply: We have Christ's word for it that there is an eternal life; and that settles the matter. There is no question here of racking one's brains or philosophizing, but simply that Christ said it, not as a profound thinker but with divine authority. Let us go further, let us suppose that a man believes in eternal life on Christ's word. In that case he believes without any fuss about being profound and searching and philosophical and 'racking his brains'. On the other hand, take the case of a man who racks his brains and ruminates profoundly on the question of immortality: would he not be justified in denying that this direct statement is a profound answer to the question? What Plato says on immortality really is profound, reached after deep study; but then poor Plato had no authority whatsoever.

#### CATHOLICISM—PROTESTANTISM

Are not Catholicism and Protestantism related to each other like—it may seem extraordinary but is really so physically—like a building which cannot stand, to a buttress which

cannot stand alone, whereas the whole is even very firm and secure, so long as they keep together, the building and the buttress which supports it. In other words: surely Protestantism, Lutheranism is really a corrective; and the result of having made Protestantism into the regulative has been to produce great confusion.

As long as Luther lived it could not be seen clearly, for he was continuously in the tense atmosphere of battle, and straining every nerve as polemicist, as well as in the smoke and steam of the battle; and as long as the fight continues there is something which corresponds to steam and smoke and which prevents one having either the time, the peace, or the clarity to see whether the point can be carried and the transposition made. Luther fought, it is always said, polemically against Catholicism: but it cannot be achieved in this way; it becomes clear how it ought to be done, but there is no time to stop, we must go on to the next point; we are fighting: but it cannot be achieved in this way, etc., and that is as far as it gets.

Then comes peace. Now we shall see whether Protestantism can stand by itself. Whether or not cannot, perhaps, be seen distinctly in a country where Catholicism exists side by side with Protestantism, for although they do not fight and each look to their own affairs there will be a reciprocal relationship at many points. In order to be able to see clearly whether and to what extent Protestantism can stand alone, it is desirable to have a country where there is no Catholicism. There one would see whether Protestantism would not—presuming that it degenerated—lead to a form of corruption to which Catholicism—presuming it degenerated—did not lead, and whether that does not show that Protestantism is not fit to stand alone.

Let us try and realize this more clearly. It was after a heavy yoke had been upon men's shoulders for a long, long time, after they had been frightened with death, judgement,

and hell for generation to generation, with fasting and scourging, it was then that the bow broke. Out of a monastery cell broke the man Luther. Now let us be careful not to separate what belongs together, the background and the foreground, not to get a landscape without background, not to get something quite meaningless.

Now what Luther dared to do was, under the circumstances, the truth; for the opposite had been falsely exaggerated.

Luther, then, broke out of the monastery. But that was not really the best opportunity of seeing with sweet reasonableness how much truth there was in the opposite, when it was not exaggerated. Luther knew he was hardly safe, and it was, therefore, rather a question of making use of the advantage he had won, by having broken out, in order to wound the opposite as deeply as possible.

Now take the order of things, just as they were when Luther broke out: they were in error: take away the assumption necessary for Luther, and Lutheranism is perfectly meaningless. Try and imagine that what Luther in extreme tension attacked as being the extreme, that it had become a sort of Result, in such a way that the extreme tension was omitted: and Lutheranism is absolute nonsense. Imagine a country, cut off from Catholic influence, to which this Lutheran Result had been brought—there the generation now living has never heard a single word about the aspect of the question which is expressed by the monastery, asceticism, etc., and which the Middle Ages exaggerated; on the contrary, it is brought up from childhood, softened from childhood with the Lutheran notion of calming an anxious conscience—though it is important to note that there is not a soul who has made his conscience anxious, however distantly. What then is Lutheranism? Is there any sense in calming the anxious conscience, when the assumption: 'anxious consciences' simply does not exist? Does not

Lutheranism become meaningless, and what is worse, does it not become a refinement, which will denote the difference between degenerated Protestantism and the corruption of degenerated Catholicism.

And that is exactly what I wanted to show, together with the fact that it indicates that Protestantism is not fit to stand alone.

When Catholicism degenerates, what form will the corruption take? The answer is easy: hypocritical sanctimoniousness. When Protestantism degenerates, what form of corruption shall we find? The answer is not difficult: shallow worldliness. But in Protestantism this will show itself with a refinement which cannot occur in Catholicism.

Set them off one against the other, hypocritical sanctimoniousness and shallow worldliness; but I maintain that into the bargain there is a certain refinement which does not appear in Catholicism, and that is the result of Protestantism being calculated upon an assumption. That is the refinement I want to show.

Let us take a perfectly simple instance. Imagine a Catholic prelate who is completely worldly—naturally not to such an extreme that the law can punish him, or that nature itself will take its revenge; no, he is altogether too worldly to be so stupid; no, the whole thing is shrewdly calculated (and this is the worldliest thing about it) for shrewd enjoyment, and then in turn for the enjoyment of this very shrewdness—and thus his whole life is the enjoyment of all possible pleasure such as no worldly-wise Epicurean could exceed. How then will the Catholic judge him? Well, I assume that he says (quite becomingly), it is not my business to pass judgement upon the higher clergy; but none the less the Catholic will readily see that it is worldliness. And why will he readily see this? Because the Catholic sees at the same time an entirely different side of Christianity expressed—a fact which the prelate must put up with, for side by side with him there

walks one who lives in poverty, and the Catholic thus has a profound sense that this is truer than the prelate's way of life, which, alas, is mere worldliness.

Now imagine on the other hand a Protestant country, where there is no trace of Catholicism, where for a long, long time people have accepted the Lutheran view, but without its original premise, where for a long, long time they have been rid of asceticism and fasting, of monks and of those who preach Christianity in poverty—and not only that, but have got rid of it thoroughly, as of something ridiculous and foolish, so that if any such figure were to turn up now, people would burst with laughter as at an outlandish beast; they have got rid of it as of a lower, an imperfect conception of Christianity. Imagine now in this Protestant country a Protestant prelate who is the exact counterpart of the Catholic. What then? Why, in this case, the Protestant prelate possesses a refinement of pleasure, a refinement for which the Catholic prelate's mouth may water in vain, inasmuch as in the whole Protestant environment there is not a living soul that has a profound sense of the significance of renouncing the world (the sort of godliness which had its share of truth, even if it was exaggerated in the Middle Ages), because the religion of the land is built upon the Result of Lutheranism (without its original premise), that godliness is nothing but a frank-hearted enjoyment of life (which is indeed wonderful when one has witnessed Luther's fear and trembling and tribulation). Thus the Protestant prelate possesses a refinement of pleasure—the luck of it, the Catholic prelate might exclaim, the deuce take him!—the refinement, namely, that his contemporaries look upon his worldliness and worldly enjoyment as godliness! Look, say the contemporaries one to another (and remember that in Catholicism the situation was that one said to the other, let us not look upon it or dwell upon it, it is just simply worldliness), behold frank-hearted Lutheranism, watch him over

the turtle soup, there is no connoisseur like him, watch him at the oyster feast, see how he can suck enjoyment from every situation, and how shrewdly he looks after his own affairs; so let us admire this frank-hearted Lutheranism! High he soars—in frank-hearted Lutheranism—high above the lower and imperfect ideal of entering a monastery, of fasting, of preaching Christianity in poverty, high he soars above it all in freedom of spirit and frank-hearted Lutheranism! The noble thing is not to wander away from the world, to flee from it—no, genuine Lutheranism is like the prelate, for this is godliness. His contemporaries do not merely put up with this or take pains to ignore it; no, they regard it with admiration—as godliness. . . .

Luther set up the highest spiritual principle: pure inwardness. It may become so dangerous that we can sink to the lowest of lowest paganism (however, the highest and the lowest are like one another) where sensual debauchery is celebrated as divine worship; and so in Protestantism a point may be reached at which worldliness is honoured and highly valued as—piety. And this—as I maintain—cannot happen in Catholicism.

But why can it not happen in Catholicism? Because Catholicism has the universal premise that we men are pretty well rascals. And why can it happen in Protestantism? Because the Protestant principle is related to a particular premise: a man who sits in the anguish of death, in fear and trembling and much tribulation—and of those there are not many in any one generation.

It is not my intention herewith to introduce monasticism, even if I were able to; my endeavour is only directed towards contributing to our coming to an understanding with truth, with the help of a few admissions.

## VII

### EPILOGUE

My God, my God, though I be clean forgot,  
Let me not love Thee, if I love Thee not.

GEORGE HERBERT

### PRAYER

Father in heaven! Hold not our sins up against us but hold us up against our sins, so that the thought of thee when it wakens in our soul, and each time it wakens, should not remind us of what we have committed but of what Thou didst forgive, not of how we went astray but of how Thou didst save us!

### NEBUCHADNEZZAR

1. Recollections of my life, when I was a beast of the field and did eat grass; I, Nebuchadnezzar, unto all people, nations and languages.
2. Was not this Babylon, the great city, the greatest among the cities of all nations; and I, Nebuchadnezzar, had built it.
3. No city was like Babylon in renown, and no king like unto me in Babylon, the honour of my majesty.
4. My kingly house was renowned to the ends of the world, and my wisdom was like a mysterious language, which none among the wise could explain.
5. And none could tell me what it was that I had dreamed.
6. And the word came to me that I should be transformed and become as a beast which eats the grass of the fields, while seven times passed over me.
7. Then I called together all my princes and their hosts, and



sent forth word that I must be prepared while seven times went over me.

8. But none dared approach Babylon the Great, and I said, Is not this great Babylon which I, Nebuchadnezzar have built.

9. Suddenly a cry was heard and I was changed, quickly, as a woman changes colour.

10. Grass became my food, the dew of heaven fell upon me, and no one knew who I was.

11. But I knew Babylon, and cried out, Is this not Babylon, and none heard my words, and none could understand aught but a cry like that of a beast.

12. My thoughts terrified me, the thoughts in my mind, for my mouth was closed, and none could hear aught but a cry like that of a beast.

13. And I thought, Who is this powerful one, the Lord, the Lord, who is like the darkness of the night and like the depths of the sea, unfathomable.

14. Yes, like a dream, which he alone can unravel, the interpretation of which he has not given into the power of any man, when it suddenly comes upon one and holds one with its powerful arms.

15. No one knows where this powerful one liveth, so that one could point and say: behold, there is his throne; so that one could journey through the land until it was said: behold, here are the boundaries of his lordship.

16. For he does not dwell on the boundary of my kingdom, as my neighbour, neither does he surround me on all sides like the sea and the mountains.

17. And neither does he live in his temple, for I, Nebuchadnezzar have taken his golden and silver vessels, and laid waste his temple.

18. And no one knows anything of him, who was his father and how he received power, or who taught him the secret of his power.

19. And he has no counsellor, that one might buy his secret for gold, none to whom one can say, What shall I do? and none who say to him, What art thou doing?

20. He has no spies to watch for the opportunity, so that one might catch him, for he does not say, To-morrow; but says, To-day.

21. For he makes no preparations, like a man, and his preparations give the enemy no respite, for he says, Let this happen—and it happens.

22. He sits still and considers with himself; one does not know whether he is present before it has happened.

23. This has he done against me. He does not aim like the archer, so that one can fly from his arrow; he speaks with himself and it happens.

24. In his hands the King's brain is like wax in the melting furnace, and its weight like a feather's weight when he weighs it.

25. And yet he does not live upon the earth like the great and powerful, so that he could take Babylon from me and let me retain a little, or so that he could take everything from me and be the powerful one in Babylon.

26. Then did I think to myself in this loneliness of my mind where none knew me, and the thoughts in my mind terrified me, that there was the Lord.

27. But when the seven ages were run out I became Nebuchadnezzar once more.

28. And I called all the wise men together, that they might explain to me the mystery of that power, and how I had become like a beast of the fields.

29. But one and all, they fell down, upon their faces and said, Great is Nebuchadnezzar! It is imagination, a bad dream, who should be able to do such things against thee.

30. But my anger was upon the wise men in the whole land, and I let them be cut down in their folly.

31. For the Lord, the Lord alone has power, as no man hath

it, and I will not envy him his might, but praise it and be near him; for I have taken his gold and silver vessels.

32. Babylon is no more great Babylon, I Nebuchadnezzar, no more Nebuchadnezzar, and my hosts no longer protect me; for none can see the Lord, and none can recognize him,

33. If he should come; and the watchmen would call in vain because I was already become like a bird in the trees, or a fish in the water, known only to other fish.

34. Therefore I will not be renowned in Babylon; but every seventh year there shall be a feast in the land,

35. A great feast for all the people, and it shall be called the Feast of the Transformation.

36. And an astronomer shall be led through the streets, and he shall be dressed as an animal, and he shall carry his calculations with him, torn to shreds like a bundle of hay.

37. And the people shall call out: The Lord, the Lord, the Lord is powerful, and his action is as swift as the leap of a great fish in the sea.

38. For soon my days are numbered, and my lordship past like a night watch, and I know not whither I go;

39. Whether I come to the invisible one in the distance, where the powerful one dwells, so that I must find grace in his eyes;

40. Whether it is he who takes the spirit of life from me, so that I become like a cast-off garment, like my predecessors; so that he should be pleased with me.

41. This have I, Nebuchadnezzar, made known to all people, nations and tongues; and great Babylon shall do my will.

#### PRAYER

O Thou who art unchangeable, whom nothing changes!  
Thou who art unchangeable in love, precisely for our welfare not submitting to any change: may we, too, will our

welfare, submitting ourselves to the discipline of Thy unchangeableness, so that we may, in unconditional obedience, find our rest and remain at rest in Thy unchangeableness. Thou art not like a man; if he is to preserve only some degree of constancy he must not permit himself too much to be moved, nor by too many things. Thou on the contrary art moved, and moved in infinite love, by all things. Even that which we human beings call an insignificant trifle, and pass by unmoved, the need of a sparrow, even this moves Thee; and what we so often scarcely notice, a human sigh, this moves Thee, O Infinite Love! But nothing changes Thee, O Thou who art unchangeable! O Thou who in infinite love dost submit to be moved, may this our prayer also move Thee to add Thy blessing, in order that there may be wrought such a change in him who prays as to bring him into conformity with Thy unchangeable will, Thou who art unchangeable!

